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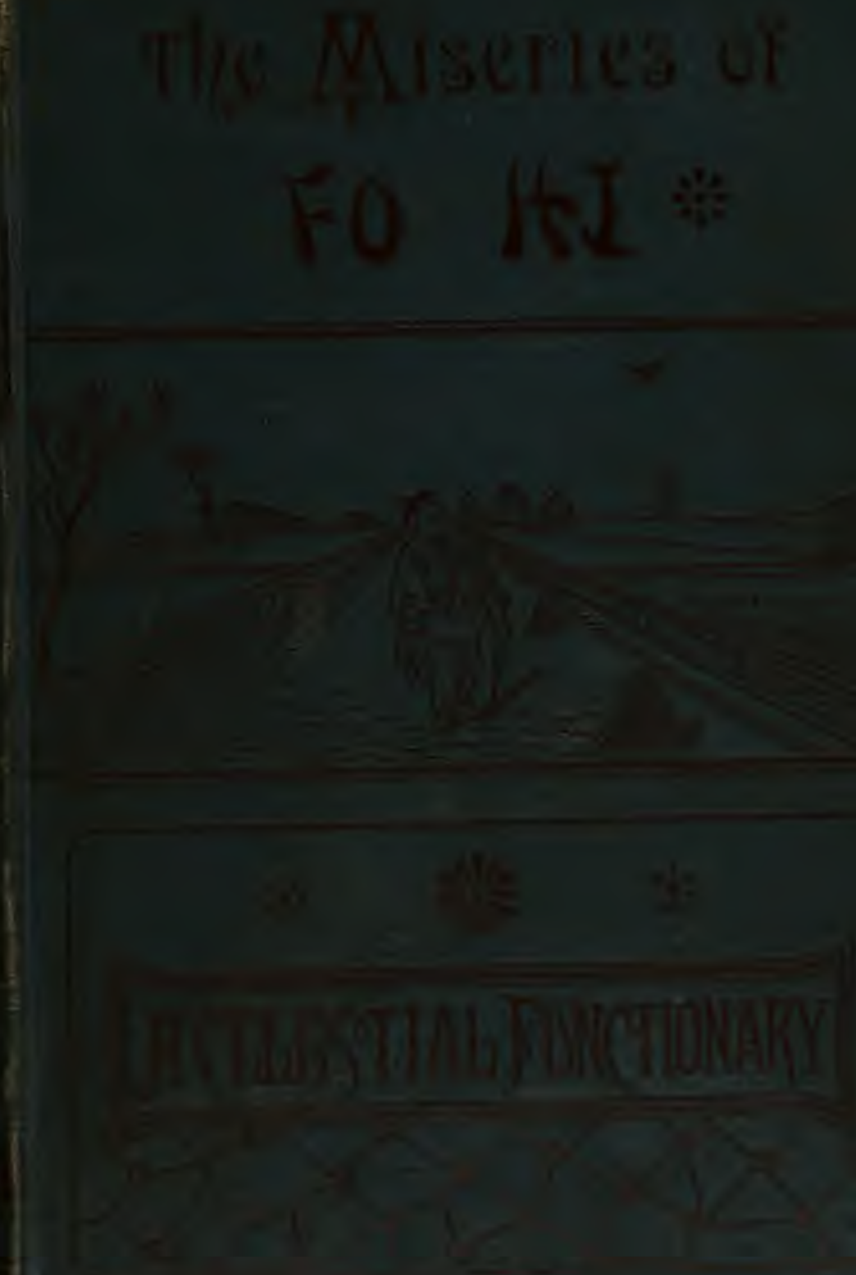
The Miseries of Fo Hi



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THE MISERIES OF

FO HI

A CELESTIAL FUNCTIONARY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

FRANCISQUE SARCEY,

BY H. R. H.

CHICAGO:
JANSEN, McCLURG & COMPANY.
1883.

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A. D. 1883.

Dec 94

Stereotyped and Printed
by the
Chicago Legal News Co.

PQ2421
S4M152
1883

PREFACE.

This story comes straight from China like the vases and images with which we decorate our mantels. The manuscript was found by a brave French officer in the sack of an imperial palace, and was brought home in his valise as one of the curiosities of that remarkable country. The officer sent it to a number of gentlemen, learned in Chinese, all of whom translated it at sight with the greatest ease. It is true that no two of them made it read alike; but that matters little. These slight differences are of frequent occurrence among the profound scholars who have studied Chinese in our colleges. From these various versions I have chosen the one which seemed to me the most diverting, and now give it to the public.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER.		PAGE.
I.	In Which it is Decided that Fo Hi's Son Shall be a Mandarin	7
II.	Young Fo Hi Enters College	14
III.	An Edifying Conversation	19
IV.	Ycung Fo Hi Graduates with all the Honors	25
V.	The King of the Future in a Quandary	29
VI.	In Which Young Fo Hi Enters upon Public Life	44
VII.	Fo Hi Starts out Splendidly	52
VIII.	A Frightful Catastrophe	62
IX.	The Tide Turns	71
X.	The Story of the Shabby Old Man	89
XI.	Some Good Resolutions	99
XII.	How Fo Hi Kept his Position	103
XIII.	A Famous Lawsuit	115
XIV.	The Oath of Allegiance	119
XV.	The Same Subject Continued	135
XVI.	Fo Hi Vents his Spleen on the Grocer's Boy	141
XVII.	A Family Reunion	153

CHAPTER.		PAGE.
XVIII.	In Which Old Li-jou-lin Turns up Again .	164
XIX.	In Which a New Character Appears on the Scene	178
XX.	Fo Hi Finds Himself Bad Company . .	188
XXI.	What Fo Hi Thinks of the News . .	200
XXII.	The Happy Le-hi-to	206
XXIII.	Shall I Then Get Married?	215
XXIV.	In Which Fo Hi Meets with a New Adventure	236
XXV.	In Which Fo Hi is Not Executed . .	246
	Epilogue and Decalogue	251

THE MISERIES OF FO HI.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH IT IS DECIDED THAT FO HI'S SON SHALL BE A MANDARIN.

"WAHTEVER will become of us with a third daughter on our hands?" said Mrs. Fo Hi, abruptly, to her husband.

"A daughter!" answered Mr. Fo Hi, with becoming dignity, "you don't know what you are talking about, my good woman. Why should it be a girl rather than a boy?"

"Because"—

"Because what?"

"Because I am sure of it."

"That is the way women reason in China,

is it? Well, for my part, dearest soul of my eyes, I don't pretend to be certain that it won't be so. The wise man is never certain of anything. But I think it will be a boy."

"And why do you think so?"

"I think so for the simple reason that I do think so."

"What a difference there is, to be sure! But may the Great Changhti hear you, my dear. A boy would be just the thing for us. We are both young yet, but twenty years from now we shall begin to grow old, and it will soon be time for us to step aside. We can then give up the business, and our son will succeed us just as you succeeded your father."

"What! My son a tradesman! My son sell rice, and pepper, and spices! A descendant of Fo Hi! Are you dreaming, Madame?"

"Well, and why not? Haven't we been selling rice and spices all our lives? And aren't we still selling them? We are making a good living, and every year are laying up a few taëls for our girls. We receive all the attention in the neighborhood which is usually shown to people who pay their bills promptly. Everybody bows to me in the street, and our acquaintances are all respectable people, like ourselves, who call in for a quiet evening over a cup of tea or a glass of rice wine. We have no quarrels with anybody, and are perfectly independent, so that when the day's accounts are made up and our girls are in bed, we have nothing to do but to go soundly to sleep. What more do you want for your son, I should like to know?"

"I want my son to be something in the world."

"We are nothing, then, I suppose. Is that what you mean?"

"That's just it, Mrs. Fo Hi; we are nothing, and it makes me mad to think of it. Every week the Governor gives his reception, but have we ever been invited? Haven't you as fine a face and as pretty a complexion and as small feet as the women whom he does invite? When the Emperor, Son of Heaven, passes through the town, will we be admitted to his presence to gaze upon his august countenance? Do we ever have a reserved seat at the public ceremonies? You know how handsome that cap of yellow silk is, and how much it cost me. Well, have I the privilege of putting a coral button on it, even as small as a nut? And how, I should like to know, is one to live without a button on his cap? I am determined that my son shall have one on his cap, at any rate. The Governor shall receive

him, and what is better, he shall himself be a Governor. Just think of that, Mrs. Fo Hi! Our son a Governor, and talking with Ministers just as I am talking with you! How much better that will be than weighing out pepper and spices!"

And Mr. Fo Hi pulled his silk night-cap proudly down over his ears. But Mrs. Fo Hi shook her head and said:

"People who can sell pepper can get along without Ministers. I would rather be a minister in my own house than dance attendance upon other people."

"How silly all that kind of talk is! I tell you my son shall be a Minister, and people shall dance attendance upon him."

Mrs. Fo Hi sighed but said nothing, for she was a Chinese woman of excellent sense. And it was not long before the prosperous couple fell asleep under their orange-colored coverlids worked with numerous birds of

paradise. But their dreams on that memorable night were very different. Mrs. Fo Hi dreamed that some good genius had taken her up on a high mountain, which turned out to be a mountain of first-class pepper. There she was, selling the pepper to her customers, and all the time sneezing tremendously. But Mr. Fo Hi, meanwhile, saw distinctly a bird of paradise with a splendid yellow cap on his head, around which sparkled thousands of buttons brighter than the sun. The bird flapped his wings and rose high up in the air, where he sat down on a Mandarin's chair and crossed his legs in a very dignified manner. Then with a friendly wave of his wing he asked Mr. Fo Hi to take the place at his side. But just as that gentleman was rising to his feet in a state of unutterable delight he was awakened by a vigorous sneeze from his wife.

"God bless you, my dear," he said to her,

cheerfully; "dreams don't deceive. My son will certainly be a Minister."

"That's just the reason why he will have to be a tradesman," replied the good lady.

And thereupon the dispute broke out again with new vigor.

Ah! marriage is a fine institution.

CHAPTER II.

YOUNG FO HI ENTERS COLLEGE.

At last the happiness of Mr. and Mrs. Fo Hi was crowned by the birth of the boy whom they expected. When he had reached the age of ten years, the first degree of life according to Celestial ideas, his father determined to take him to the Forest of Pencils. This is the name which the Chinese in their poetical language give to their colleges. Mrs. Fo Hi immediately reported this resolution to a certain bonze* to whom she was in the habit of confiding her husband's business as well as her own. This worthy gentleman without a moment's delay rushed over to Fo Hi's mansion in a state of great excitement and said:

*A Buddhist priest.

"May Tao pour out his blessings upon you! You are very imprudent. Your son is lost if you take him to that Forest of Pencils. Under the pretext of teaching him Sanskrit and Prakrit they will corrupt his young mind and fill it with poison. The books which they will put into his hands were written two thousand years ago. They do not, therefore, tell of the true God, for he had not then come into existence. They are made up of abominable poems which celebrate the Metamorphoses of Vishnu and the superstitions of an idolatrous religion. And for examples of piety they exalt those absurd Fakirs who go about stark naked."

"Oh, my! stark naked!" exclaimed Mrs. Fo Hi, blushing.

"Yes, stark naked," replied the bonze, "and they drive nails into their legs, and throw themselves under the car of Juggernaut. You know very well how contagious

such things are! Now, put your son in my care. We will teach him a very different kind of Sanskrit, and to much better purpose. We will educate him in the fear of Tao and of his representatives upon earth. We will make him a young man after our own heart, who will never eat unclean food, who will give, through us, large sums of money in charity, and who will never put nails into his legs."

But Mr. Fo Hi was unmoved by this eloquent appeal, for he said in reply:

"It isn't likely that any such ambition will get the best of him. It may have been the fashion two thousand years ago to drive nails into one's legs, but it has been out of date too long to be revived in these days, all the books in the world to the contrary notwithstanding. I am not acquainted with any of the poets of whom you speak, but however beautiful their verses may be they don't have any

effect upon anybody. No, I am not worried about anything of that kind, and you certainly love your ease too well to give yourself any anxiety about it. I should be very willing to put my son under your instruction if I intended to devote him to the service of Tao. But I want to make a man of him and not a bonze, and therefore it is much better that he should be taught by men, and that he should learn from the very first how to act among men. I don't care how much it will cost me. I have the great honor of bidding you good-day and God-speed!"

And thereupon he took his departure, and left the bonze alone with Mrs. Fo Hi, to whom the wily priest thus poured out his heart:

"Alas! alas! such blindness makes me tremble! Unfortunate Chinese! Unfortunate China! Ah! my dear lady, it is for you to

atone for the errors of your husband, and to invoke God's blessing on your son, for he will have need enough of it. Our religious houses are very poor. His Majesty, Son of Heaven, who expends so much money on his colleges, allows us also a small subsidy which goes to keep up our rival institutions. But the sum is insufficient, and it is necessary that the pious should come to our assistance. We are living on the charity of the public."

"Here!" said Mrs. Fo Hi, "take this and pray for my poor son, but don't say anything about it to my husband, for he would scold."

"Don't be alarmed, my lady," said the bonze, bowing himself out, "I am the humble servant of him who said: 'Let not your left hand know the money which your right hand receives.'"

CHAPTER III.

AN EDIFYING CONVERSATION.

ONE of Mr. Fo Hi's neighbors was a learned old man, whose name was Li-jou-lin. He was a philosopher, very wise and very shrewd, who spent his life in seeking the truth, and who, when he believed that he had found it, uttered it cheerfully. He had some very original ideas upon certain delicate matters, and in his books boldly made fun of bigots and fools. He had in this way made a great reputation, and also a great many enemies. He was disliked by those who took him in bad part, and the people who caught his meaning were pretty sure to take him so.

But little did he care for that. He despised honors and appointments, and with true philosophical contentment he was sat-

isfied to dine upon a crust of bread soaked in a glass of water.

To this singular genius Mr. Fo Hi went and said:

"Neighbor, I have come to ask your advice. I have a son who is a very bright boy, and in mind far in advance of his age. His mother is urging me to send him to college, where he can study Sanskrit and all those other fine things which are taught there. You are a scholar, and I want you to tell me what you think of it?".

"First answer me a single question," replied Li-jou-lin. "How much are you worth?"

"Oh! don't trouble yourself about that, my friend! We can stand it. Of course we shall have to pinch a little. But Mrs. Fo Hi will get along with one gown the less, and I will discharge one of my clerks and

do his work myself. There is a great deal of work in me yet."

"I don't doubt it, but that is not what I asked you. How much of a fortune can you settle upon your son when he shall have completed his studies?"

"What! how much of a fortune!"

"Yes, certainly. Only those who teach Sanskrit make a living out of it. I have eaten the bread which it brings in, and, I can tell you, I don't wish any one such a life as that."

"But I have always been told that Sanskrit is the road to everything."

"Very true! but one takes a great risk when he enters upon a road which leads in every direction but which ends nowhere. Sanskrit is the ornament of a great fortune. It is not the means of gaining a fortune. It is certainly very difficult to keep one's rank in good society without some little

knowledge of that ancient language and of the subjects connected with it. But then it is impossible to get into good society at all without new gloves and polished boots. Are you able to keep him in boots?"

"But he will have a position?"

"Yes, but the position which he will get will no more than supply him with bread, while it will make the boots a necessity. The Emperor has too many people in his service to pay them much. He gives them just enough to save them from starvation, but at the same time he requires them to be lodged and dressed, whatever their rank in the service may be, in a manner worthy of him whom they represent. You understand arithmetic, my good friend, for you are a merchant. Now what would you say to an investment which would cost you ten thousand taëls, and would yield you only five per cent., besides demanding every moment of

your time? Wouldn't you call it a losing business? Well, it is the very thing which you are now thinking of. The education of a young man consumes fourteen or fifteen years, ten of which are passed in college, and the remainder in the professional schools. Calculate now how much you will have to lay out every year, then add the compound interest, and at the end of the time you will have a very handsome capital invested in your son's head. If, upon his coming of age, you were to give him that amount in money, or in land, it would be the foundation of a large fortune and an influential position in the community. On the other hand, you give it to him in Sanskrit, and what is the result? He gets a place which confines him from morning till night, which shuts out every hope of fortune and independence, and the money-return of which scarcely equals the interest on the sum

invested. That is plain enough, isn't it?"

"And yet," said Fo Hi, the grocer, rubbing his ear, "the Rector of the College where I took my son yesterday ——"

"Oh! you took your son to the College yesterday, did you?"

"Exactly! To be sure I did!"

"Just the thing, just the thing. I advise you to leave him there."

"Well! I am delighted that you think so. Folks are right when they call you a clever man. Whenever you need any rice or sugar, just come to our place. You shall have the best at the lowest price."

CHAPTER IV.

YOUNG FO HI GRADUATES WITH ALL THE HONORS.

I AM vexed with the hero of this story. He was neither a dunce nor a genius. He hovered between the two, rather nearer the one than the other. But as he was industrious and docile, he was a favorite with his professors, who spoke of him as a distinguished pupil because there was nothing to distinguish him from his comrades. In a class of sixty students, forty are always distinguished. Young Fo Hi was one of the forty. During the nine years which he passed at the Forest of Pencils he learned everything which is taught there; that is, very little of anything. A few words of Sanskrit and Prakrit formed the most con-

spicuous of his attainments. His father took him occasionally to call upon the old scholar Li-jou-lin, who took a great deal of pleasure in drawing the little fellow into conversation.

"My boy will some day be something," the father would say, proudly.

"It would be much better if he were to be some *one*," the old philosopher would mutter in reply.

He discovered by questioning him that this future savant had no very keen taste for his studies. To be sure, he felt no very decided dislike for them, but when he was told to translate from Sanskrit into Chinese, and from Chinese into Sanskrit, he did it with the same supreme indifference with which his father's clerk would have changed a customer's order from a bag of prunes to a ton of rice.

"What an excellent grocer this young im-

becile would have made!" thought Li-joulin. "Another vocation missed!"

At length the year came round in which the son of Mr. Fo Hi was to pass his final examination before the literary tribunal. His professors put into his hands a great book in which a friend of youth and of science had collected and admirably arranged everything which had been said, done, and known by men, since man made his appearance upon the earth. This wonderful work the young man learned by heart from beginning to end, for he had an excellent memory. And in this way he was enabled to astonish his examiners by the quickness and the accuracy of his answers. He therefore received the verdant palm-leaf of which a celebrated Chinese has said elegantly:

"It grows on the threshold of the Forest of Pencils, and allows itself to be plucked by those alone who have learned the magic

words. Armed with this talisman, they go forth into life, and every door opens before them. They are the Kings of the Future."

When it was all over young Fo Hi went back to the paternal mansion with head erect, as became a king of the future, and told the news to his father. That worthy gentleman wept with joy, and made a great banquet to which he invited his relatives and friends without forgetting old Li-jou-lin. Everybody drank the health of the young king of the future and predicted a most brilliant career for him. The future always looks bright when we see it across a glass of sparkling wine.

About midnight nobody but Li-jou-lin was in a condition to know what he was talking about, and even he had nothing to say. So he slipped out smiling under his beard. At last the king of the future had a bad attack of indigestion, and thus ended one of the happiest days of his life.

CHAPTER V.

THE KING OF THE FUTURE IN A QUANDARY.

"AND what do you advise me to do now?" asked the young graduate one day of Li-jou-lin. "All the professions are open to me. Which shall I choose?"

"The grocery profession," answered the philosopher.

"What? I a grocer? Oh! come now!"

"Why, it's your father's profession, young man."

"But my father doesn't know a word of Sanskrit. What was the use of losing ten years in studying it, if I am only to follow in his footsteps?"

"A great deal of use. It will enable you to enjoy your fortune when you have made it."

But the king of the future screwed up

his lips contemptuously, and concluded that the old man was talking nonsense. So he took his departure, still undecided as to his future course. But as he was going down the street he met one of his classmates, who carried him off to his room, which was very pretty and hung all round with opium pipes. The young man was a law student, and it was his room and his pipes which decided Fo Hi's profession. His mind was made up, and forthwith he went to his father and said:

"I would like to study law." At this Mrs. Fo Hi chimed in, and declared that it would require at least three years more of large outlay, and that there was no certainty that, even after these new studies, still greater sacrifices would not be necessary. She added, too, that her girls were now of marriageable age, and they must think of getting husbands for them. Now the two sisters were listening to the conversation

through the key-hole. They were good girls, although a trifle too curious. But then no one is perfect, as the wise Confucius says. When, therefore, they heard what their mother said about them, they walked in boldly and joined in the conversation, both of them declaring that they were in no hurry, and that they would very cheerfully wait to enable their brother to set out suitably on the road to distinction. They said, besides, that they wanted to be married, not for their dot, but for themselves alone, which is one of the prejudices of young Chinese women. Tears rained in showers that evening in the family of the estimable Mr. Fo Hi. But at last, after a great many kisses and more tears, it was decided that the king of the future should have an allowance from his father.

Of course the young fellow made all sorts of fine promises, and to his credit it must

be said that he kept them as well as he could. He was not bad, and he was not lazy. His mind was of that medium sort which follows with perfect docility the path marked out for it. He went on in a mechanical kind of way wherever the gale of circumstances impelled him, looking neither to the right nor to the left. There are more minds of this sort in the world than we think, for as one of the most celebrated philosophers of China has very justly said:

"Man in general is neither an angel nor a brute."

During these three years of legal study, young Fo Hi did not therefore lose himself. He only lost his father's money. He passed all his examinations with honor, won all the degrees, and at last received a handsome diploma, signed by the Minister and countersigned by the Emperor, by which he was authorized to wear a crystal button on his

cap. And on that auspicious day Fo Hi the elder felt himself compensated for all his sacrifices, and even Mrs. Fo Hi allowed herself to be dazzled by the brilliancy of that button. She forgot, poor woman, that for three years she had risen at four o'clock in the morning, and had done the work of two servants. But the diploma was suitably framed and hung up in the best room in the house. And it must be said that it was a great consolation to the two sisters to see it hanging there, for with all their generosity they had not escaped some wakeful and anxious nights.

And now at last the great Tao took pity on their humdrum lives, and sent them both husbands. Pe-ka-o sued for the eldest. He was a good fellow, finely formed, broad-shouldered, and had a laugh which could be heard at a great distance. He belonged to the agricultural class, and owned a farm,

which he cultivated himself. He was told plainly that he must expect no dowry with his bride, but he did not frown. He replied immediately that a good housekeeper was the best of treasures on a farm, and that Miss Fo Hi was rich enough in beauty and goodness to dispense with any other dowry. The compliment was, to be sure, neither very new nor very elegantly expressed, but it was sincere, and was given in the frank and whole-hearted manner which dispels all doubt. It was enough that it was a compliment. So Miss Fo Hi smiled sweetly and accepted him.

The younger daughter was scarcely a year younger than her sister, and this approaching wedding put some ideas into her head. She went to her father and told him that she was in love with Chi-kau go, and Chi-kau-go she must marry.

"Good gracious! What!" exclaimed Mr.

Fo Hi in the greatest astonishment. "My clerk! But I can't throw my daughter at his head. He will have to ask me for her first."

"Oh! he will never dare to do that. You are so dignified, you know, papa!"

"But do you know whether he loves you? Has the rascal had the impudence to tell you so?"

"He! Why he doesn't even dare to look at me."

"Well, well, I declare!"

The girl smiled, like her sister, only much more mischievously. She sat down on her father's knee and put her arms around his neck, and then went on:

"You will take him into partnership, and we will stay with you always. You will grow old surrounded by your children and, Heaven willing, your grandchildren, and we will all be happy, for we shall all be together."

"All right! Send him to me," said Mr. Fo Hi, who already saw his grandchildren climbing up his legs and shouting, "Grandpa! Grandpa!"

Chi-kau-go made his appearance forthwith, trembling like an aspen leaf, and with his face as red as a peony. He was naturally very timid, although he was nothing but a rough workingman. But Mr. Fo Hi had discovered that he was a man of good common sense, and common sense is worth much more in business than intellect.

Well, the whole thing was agreeably arranged, and the two weddings came off on the same day. Doctor Fo Hi condescended to honor the festivities with his crystal button. He was, of course, a little ashamed of the brothers-in-law that his sisters had brought him, but, upon reflection, he recollected that he also was to blame for it, as they had sacrificed their marriage portion

for him. He therefore promised himself that some day he would take them from their present low calling, and by his credit and influence raise them to a position more worthy of himself. He would be their patron, and this flattering fancy reconciled him to their present inferior condition. He even composed four or five couplets in honor of the two brides, which sounded very pretty, but which we suppress lest the reader should not get as much enjoyment out of them as did Mr. Fo Hi. As for Mrs. Fo Hi, she wept profusely when they were sung, she wept again in the evening when she had to give up her daughters to their husbands, and she began to weep again the next morning as soon as she woke up. There is something marvellous in tears. They give relief to the greatest joys as well as the greatest sorrows.

"Well, now, my boy," said Mr. Fo Hi,

senior, to his son, clapping him vigorously on the shoulder. "Your sisters are settled, and now it is your turn. As the Government has given you an education, it now owes you a position. We will make an application."

The grocer therefore became now a solicitor. The honeymoon of the two young couples beamed gently on the long and fruitless exertions of the worthy man, and mitigated the annoyance which he suffered in his failures. He went at first to the Master of the Brazen Rod, who exercises in China the same functions as the Minister of Justice in France. For some months he showered appeals and petitions upon this official. These documents were of all possible kinds and styles. Some were polite and dignified, some were alarmingly familiar, and still others were pathetic and importunate. Sometimes they appealed to the reason, and

sometimes to the heart of the dignitary. They referred frequently to the services which the family of Fo Hi, from generation to generation, had rendered to the country by selling pepper, and their unwavering fidelity to the Emperor and his august consort. Then the fine education and the personal merits of the candidate were exalted, and especial emphasis was laid upon the sums which his extensive preparation had cost. At other times another vein was struck, and the fate of the young man was deplored, whose splendid powers could find no employment, and whose only hope was in the kindness of the Minister.

To all these petitions, which might have moved the heart of a tiger, the Minister sent no reply whatever. I have no doubt that his mind was full of other business. The grocer was not discouraged, however. Among his customers, or rather his clients

as he called them, there were some very influential people, and to these he went until they were worn out. Some of them, to get rid of him, endorsed his applications, which were, however, no better received for that. Others promised to do something for him, and then ordered the servants to shut the door in his face if he should return. The poor man, who, up to this time, had been plump, fresh, and spry, and whose face had beamed with health and happiness, became now haggard and sallow. That bright and blooming countenance grew sadly long and bent downward to the grave. He neglected his shop, and had fits of bad temper toward his wife, and son, and everybody, but especially toward Ministers, of whom he spoke with alarming freedom. For instance, he said one day, in a confidential mood, to old Li jou-lin:

"I'm sure I don't know what we pay them so well for. They don't attend to the business of the country, and meanwhile my son is on the street with nothing to do. That boy has cost me my very eyes, and he is still costing me his weight in money. He is endorsed by everybody, and I have interested all the people whom I know, as well as some whom I don't know. A Mandarin of the first class, who took an interest in him because he was at college with his nephew, was to speak a good word for him, but nothing ever came of it. The Minister has made many fine promises, but that is all very cheap. There is no sign of any appointment yet. If I could get to the Emperor I would tell him the whole story."

Now the old philosopher might have found some malicious satisfaction in replying to this tirade, "I told you so." But he was a good-natured philosopher, and he knew

that it would not help matters any. So he said quietly:

"What place would you like your son to have?"

"Oh, it doesn't matter what or where," said Mr. Fo Hi. "Only let my boy get a start, and he will make his way, I'll warrant."

"Very well. I will ask my old housekeeper to use her influence for you."

At this the grocer opened his eyes wide with surprise, and thought that Li-jou-lin was making fun of him. But he was mistaken. The old man was in earnest. So the housekeeper was called, and the whole business was related to her. After she had heard it she said, modestly, as she retired:

"I will try what I can do."

Now this old woman had an intimate friend, an old rag-picker, whose son was a soldier of the Imperial Guard. This valiant

young man was the lover of a cousin of the lady's-maid whose business it was every morning to dress the hair of the Minister's wife. And thus it came to pass that eight days after this conversation, Mr. Fo Hi junior received a very large letter bearing the Imperial seal. With trembling hands he tore it open, and when he had hastily read it through, he shouted:

"I have a place!"

"He has a place!" echoed the delighted father.

"He has a place! He has a place!" shouted everybody in the house. And soon the neighbors, men and women, joined in, and a single shout rang through the shop and far out into the street—

"He has a place! He has a place!"

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH YOUNG FO HI ENTERS UPON PUBLIC LIFE.

"AND what place is it?" everybody asked, after the first outburst of delight.

Well, it must be acknowledged that it was not a very brilliant place. It was of course not worthy of the superior abilities of the young man; but then a beginning has to be made somewhere.

It is well known that the Chinese construct their roads, as we do here, by laying a bed of broken stone, which is pressed down firm and hard with a huge roller. The Chinese are the real inventors of the Macadam pavement, as they are also of the mariner's compass and of gunpowder. The laborers are stationed at intervals along the

road, and it is their business to break the large stones into fragments, which they then collect in heaps along the wayside. Now the shape and size of these heaps of stone were regulated at a very early date by the founder of the twenty-second dynasty, upon whom Heaven bestowed the spirit of wisdom. Two or three thousand years later the incomparable Se-i-ho covered himself with glory by ordaining the exact number of small stones which these heaps should contain. He fixed upon the number 3333, because three is a sacred number, and by repeating it three times we get the number nine, which is the number of the celestial spheres and of the attributes of the Omnipotent. This ordinance remained in force for seven hundred and fifty years, until the reign of the wise Fisch-ton-kan, whose fame is universal. This great monarch published a decree, in which, while doing justice to the wise and

exalted views of his predecessor, he declared that his enactment evidenced gross superstition, and was no longer in accordance with Chinese ideas. He therefore struck a mean between the blind partisans of routine on the one hand, who wanted to retain the sacred number, and the rash innovators, on the other hand, who demanded that the number should be reduced to three thousand. He fixed the legal tale of stones at 3300, and flattered himself that this reform, so desirable and so necessary, would be final. But one hundred and fifty years later, a pupil of Confucius, the immortal Ka-o-li, made another change in the heaps of stone. He ordered that the tale of each heap should never exceed 3000, and declared that this number alone could insure the happiness of China. A few grumblers found fault with this change, but a grateful nation with one voice bestowed on Ka-o-li the title, which

he so richly deserved, Father of his Country.

I can only speak here from memory, of a vast number of regulations, some of which prescribed that the small stones should be round, so as not to hurt the horses' feet, and others that they should be sharp at the end so that they might be pressed in more closely by the roller. The reader may consult for himself, in the Archives of the Empire, this great collection of decrees, which fills no less than eighteen volumes, and which remains as one of the most splendid monuments of Chinese wisdom.

We see, then, that the construction of Chinese roads must employ an army of laborers and officials. There is, first of all, the stone-breaker, who occupies the lowest rank in this scale of preferment, who is regarded as a mere laborer, and who is despised accordingly. Then comes the Master-Surveyor, who arranges the heaps of stone in

the desired shape; then the Controller, who examines and counts them; then the Auditor, who recounts them; then the Inspector, who supervises these different officers; and last of all the Director-in-chief, whose business is to direct the whole department, in accordance with his instructions from the Minister, to whom they are communicated directly by the Emperor. The heaps of stone are the ornament and the pride of China, but she pays dearly for them, as Panurge says in a pious book written by a famous bonze. The stone-breaker works all day, and barely earns his living. The Master-Surveyor does a little less, and is paid a little more, and so on, up to the Director-in-Chief, who is paid a very large salary for doing nothing but fold his arms.

Good situations like these are very much sought after, as we may well suppose, and although the Emperor has again and again

increased the number of them, his subjects are not yet satisfied. There are almost as many Master-Surveyors in China as there are heaps of stone, but the applicants for appointment are more numerous than the stars of heaven. The government, therefore, being desirous of doing something for them, has created the position of Supernumerary. The Supernumeraries are the people who are told: "Be patient. The first vacant position shall be yours. Just wait." And while waiting they play with the buckles on their robes. But as even this was insufficient to meet the demands of the case, another position still has been provided, that of Supernumerary-Expectant.

The young and incomparable Fo Hi was accordingly nominated as "Supernumerary-Expectant Master-Surveyor of Stone Heaps," at the small town of Pi-ho. The whole family immediately looked up the place on

the map, and found that it was at the other end of the Empire. Mrs. Fo Hi sighed as she thought that she might never see her son again. But the young man was transported with delight at the prospect of seeing the country.

By special favor, a few days before his departure he had an audience with the Minister of Public Works. He was exceedingly nervous as he entered the door, for he expected that the dignitary would receive him coldly and haughtily. But he was greatly mistaken. He found the Minister a plain, easy, refined man, who received him with as much kindness as dignity. He talked pleasantly with him for five minutes, gave him some good advice, and concluded by telling him that a bright future was opening before him, and that with the education which he had received he could not fail to make rapid advancement in his profession.

The young man did not understand very clearly of what use Sanskrit could be to him in the work of surveying stones. But he went away no less delighted with his interview, and ordered immediately a superb blue suit of clothes, embroidered with silver. This was the uniform of his office. Mr. Fo Hi, senior, had to pay for the suit, of course. He also paid the travelling expenses and such other sums as were necessary to launch the young man upon his career becomingly. He did it all gladly, for he believed the time was not distant when he would be richly rewarded for his many sacrifices.

CHAPTER VII.

FO HI STARTS OUT SPLENDIDLY.

THAT day of recompense came far more quickly than any one could have expected. Young Fo Hi was in luck. An obliging attack of cholera took out of his path in a few weeks two Supernumeraries-Expectant, three Supernumeraries, and better still, a full-blown official, who died, like any ordinary mortal, of the colic. One hundred and seventeen candidates for the position which he had held sent in their applications, but of that number only four or five were really eligible. The Minister was eagerly solicited in behalf of two of the rival applicants, by two personages of equal importance, and both of whom he feared to offend. Therefore, that neither of them might feel slighted,

he set aside both applicants, and chose a third, at random, for the position. The party whose good luck was born of this accident was no other than our hero Fo Hi, who was thereupon persuaded that in China merit weighs vastly more than official favor. He entered upon his new labors on the first of April, 7961. He was young and enthusiastic, and ambitious to rise, and therefore displayed remarkable zeal in the discharge of his duties. He was always at his post before the hour fixed by the rules, urging on his laborers, counting his tale of stones, and arranging his heap with a care and precision which the citizens of Pi-ho still remember with admiration. He passed his evenings in preparing the daily reports which every Surveyor had to make of the day's proceedings. These he handed to the Controller, who sent them, without reading them, to the Auditor, who in turn passed them

on to the Inspector, who turned them over to the Director-in-Chief, who forwarded them to the Minister, who carefully deposited them in a box, where scholars may still find them in the thirty-eighth alcove of the Archives, column No. 117, under title No. 1,285,000.

Mr. Fo Hi, junior, was very much surprised that no one had ever complimented him on these reports, into which he put his whole soul, and which he embellished with some telling Sanskrit citations. But he kept on writing them in the same style, and continued to exert himself so earnestly to do his work well, that he began to get the ill-will of his comrades. The more sensible of them excused him on the ground that it was the enthusiasm of youth which would soon pass off. But the majority of them regarded him privately as an intriguer, who was trying to distinguish himself to the injury of his comrades by his new and dan-

gerous zeal in the service. They treated him with cold reserve, and looked at him askance with flashing eyes. But he consoled himself with the thought that he had the approval of his own conscience, and the good opinion of his superiors.

When he had time, he wrote a long letter to his father, in which he related all that he had done and was doing. And when this inspiring epistle was read to the family it gave them all the liveliest pleasure. But old Li-jou-lin did not share in the general satisfaction. He shook his head slowly and wisely, and said:

"That doesn't please me at all. It isn't good for a young man to show himself too capable in a subordinate position. People will be too willing to let him stay there. The wise Confucius was in the habit of saying: 'No zeal! No zeal!'"

"No zeal!" exclaimed Mr. Fo Hi, senior.

"I should like to see one of my clerks shirking his work. I tell you he would very quickly get his discharge," and grasping the hand of his son-in-law, who was standing by, he added: "You see here before you an example of what a man gets by putting his heart into his work."

"But you are not the Government," said the old man, "and the Empire is not a grocery-store. You have as many men in your employ as you actually need, not one more. You require them to do your work for you, and you pay them in proportion to their diligence."

"Yes, that's true. And the better they do their work, the more I pay them."

"And you are perfectly right. The Government, however, does just the contrary, and it is right, too. Just think of the confusion which your son must introduce into the machinery of the administration, with his

fine enthusiasm. At one stroke he makes all his superior officers useless and unnecessary. For of what use is a Controller who has nothing to control, or an Auditor who has nothing to audit? Do you suppose that these gentlemen will, with their eyes open, allow your young man to teach the public that it can get along without them? You can make up your mind that they don't like his performances any better than his comrades. He is a young upstart, breaking the peace of the City of God. Is there anything finer or more marvellously ordered than a Government in which each one gives up a part of his work to his neighbor in a spirit of broad public charity? The Surveyor does not survey accurately out of regard for the feelings of the Controller, who in his turn is a little lax in his duties out of respect for the Auditor, who again permits himself a little carelessness in his work out of

politeness to the Inspector, who takes good care not to supervise anything, lest he should take the wind out of the Director-in-Chief's sails. And this dignitary, for his part, is both blind and deaf to everything out of thoughtfulness for the Minister. Thus you have a courteous interchange of kind offices all the way up, which is calculated to promote the harmony of the Empire. In this way the work gets done leisurely, and, so to speak, of itself, in the natural course of things, without disagreeable haste or dangerous enthusiasm."

"Oh!" exclaimed the grocer. "You think the work will get done of itself, do you?"

"Well, it will not get overdone, at any rate!"

"Why, how is that?" asked Fo Hi's son-in-law, who seemed very much puzzled at the philosopher's reasoning.

"Bless me!" replied Li-jou-lin. "It's

plain enough. If the work isn't done, what is there for the Emperor to do, to remedy the matter, but to appoint a new batch of Surveyors? This, of course, will necessitate the appointment of two or three Controllers, for whom an Auditor must be provided. Just think how many new positions are created in this way, and how nicely it is all managed! Now your son is an interloper who settles like a white frost upon this fruitful process of official multiplication. He will get himself into trouble if he isn't careful. Write him that I say so."

Mr. Fo Hi did write, but his letter reached its destination at an unlucky time. It was the last day of the first quarter, and Fo Hi junior had just drawn his pay. Those who have had the unspeakable pleasure of holding public office know the fascination and the bliss of pay-day. Our hero jingled in the palm of his hand the pretty taëls, on which

glittered the likeness of the Emperor, and thrust his father's wise admonitions into his pocket without a moment's thought. Fourteen times he wrote his signature on the fourteen receipts which the cashier handed him, and he would have written it two hundred times if it had been required. Five per cent., however, was deducted from each month's wages, besides twelve per cent. from the first month's, which, he was told, was a delicate bit of forethought on the part of the Government for the purpose of accumulating for him a reserve fund, which would assure him a maintenance for his old age. He thought this the best idea he had ever heard of, and it gave him such a sense of security that he invited all his comrades to dinner. There he got them all tipsy, got as tipsy himself as a bonze, spent in one night the whole quarter's pay which he had drawn

in the morning, and woke up the next evening with a tremendous pain in his head, and without a cent in his pocket.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FRIGHTFUL CATASTROPHE.

"POVERTY is not a vice," said some one to a philosopher. "It is far worse," was the reply. And young Fo Hi was not long in finding out to his sorrow that this philosopher was no fool. The expense of living was not very great in the village where he acted as one of the representatives of the Emperor, but his salary scarcely exceeded the small sum which he paid for his food and lodging. Fortunately, he had a well-stocked wardrobe. He took care of it himself; and no old maid, dependent on a rich cousin, ever brushed, folded, examined and kept in order her belongings with more minute care and precision. His fine blue suit embroidered with silver was still fresh and

bright, and in this he dressed on great occasions. And the respectful salutes which this striking costume won for him when he promenaded the streets in it compensated him for all his tribulations. For the moment, he could forget that he was sinking step by step into that worst of all miseries, misery in an embroidered suit. He was not a man who could meet a creditor at every street corner without blushing. He was as honest at heart as he was narrow in mind. In order to live and to maintain the dignity of his position, without defrauding any one, he inflicted the most cruel privations upon himself.

"It will soon be over," he said to himself one morning as he was soaking a cent's worth of bread in a cent's worth of milk for his breakfast. "My faithfulness, I am sure, will soon be noticed by my superior officers, and I shall then be promoted. I shall have

a larger salary, and will live more comfortably, and will then be repaid for all my sacrifices."

It was not long before he heard some news which filled his heart with hope and joy. It was announced to the inhabitants of Pi-ho, that the Minister of Public Works had been sent by the Emperor on a tour of inspection to the distant districts of the Empire, and would honor them by entering the gates of the town for a visit of a few hours. Fo Hi had no doubt that he would be presented to His Excellency, the Minister, on the day of his arrival, would be complimented for his exemplary conduct, and that he would then be promoted to the post which he had so honestly earned. And so strongly was he moved by these expectations that, for three nights before the day of the Minister's arrival, he did not sleep a wink.

At length the great dignitary came, in

grand style, in a coach drawn by four white horses at full gallop. By order of the Director-in-chief the road by which he was to enter the town was strewn with leaves and flowers. But by some accident, a large branch of some tree had been thrown in the street and now lay there concealed by the leaves. The coachman who was driving the galloping steeds did not see the obstacle, and the carriage, suddenly arrested, jolted terribly, and His Excellency, the Minister, who was innocently looking out of the window, was shot out forcibly right upon a heap of stones, where he lay sprawled at full length as if he had fallen into a feather bed. As luck would have it, this particular heap of stones was in Fo Hi's jurisdiction.

His Excellency took no time to admire the art with which the heap was constructed. He picked himself up bleeding, but dignified. At the report of his horrible fall, the whole

village, which was awaiting his approach a little further on, raised a shout of dismay and ran to the spot. But the Minister beckoned to them to be quiet, after which he listened to the five speeches which had been prepared for him, and replied with a self-possession which was praised in all the official gazettes. He then went to the village hotel, where all the government officials passed in procession before his august countenance, whose majestic grace was heightened by a pretty plaster of English taffeta. These rascally Englishmen manage to get their goods in everywhere.

Fo Hi appeared in his turn, bearing himself with a modest and yet confident air, in his suit of blue embroidered with silver. As he was passing, an official of high rank bent towards His Excellency, the Minister, and pointed the young man out to him.

"Ah! is this Mr. Fo Hi?" asked the dignitary.

"Yes, Your Excellency," answered the young man, blushing to his very ears.

"Very well, sir, you shall hear from me," replied the Minister, and the procession passed on.

That night seemed incomparably long to our young hero, who lay wide awake, haunted by dreams, brighter and more brilliantly decorated than his best suit. The next morning he was ordered to report at the house of the Director-in chief, and obeyed as speedily as he could.

"Sir," said the Director to him, putting his hand into his vest in an exceedingly dignified manner, "His Excellency, the Minister, who is magnanimity itself, has seen fit to give to you and to the public a new proof of the greatness of his soul. He does not discharge you."

At these words Fo Hi started back in astonishment, and the Director-in-chief continued:

"I see very plainly, sir, that this mark of magnanimity astonishes you. I confess that it is the very excess of kindness, and is quite unheard of. But finally, His Excellency grants you his pardon."

"Well! but what have I done?" exclaimed poor Fo Hi.

His Honor, the Director-in-chief, let his hand drop from his vest in amazement, and casting upon the young man an indignant look, said severely:

"What have you done? You dare to ask such a question, do you? The stone which so cruelly wounded the august cheek of His Excellency, the Minister, was sharp and pointed. Now, the regulations of the Department provide that all the stones shall be carefully rounded. How did it happen?"

"Your Honor will be so good as to pardon me if I interrupt you, but the regulations of which you speak say exactly the contrary."

"Well, this is pleasant!" exclaimed the dignitary, with a bitter sneer. "You give me the lie, do you? You have a peculiar idea of the duties of a public officer! I have read some of the reports, sir, which you send us daily, and I can tell you that if you had attended to your work instead of making phrases, all this would not have happened. Your business, sir, is to count stones and not to quote Sanskrit."

"It was not worth while then to make me learn it," muttered Fo Hi, in a tone of deep injury.

"What do you say? I really believe you are arguing the matter with me! His Excellency, the Minister, can forgive a fault, however serious it may be. But for my

part, I can not overlook an impertinence. I suspend you from your office for six weeks, without pay. Go, sir, and let this be a lesson to you."

CHAPTER IX.

THE TIDE TURNS.

Fo Hi left the presence of the Director-in-chief with the dazed and stupid air of a man who has just been dealt a heavy blow on the head. His eyes had a vacant stare, and his ears rang strangely. From his absent manner, he might have been thought tipsy. But he made his way to his room, and found there awaiting him a letter from his father, which ran as follows:

"My dear son:—We are all well here. Your two sisters have made me a grandfather on the same day and at nearly the same hour. You have two very pretty little nieces, who bear a wonderful resemblance to their grandfather. I confess that a boy would have suited me much better, for you

would, of course, have taken him under your protection, and have advanced him to the highest positions. I can see his fortune already made. But nothing is lost by waiting. I shall order a little nephew for you. Your sisters will be willing, I am sure.

"Your brother-in-law Pe-ka-o is doing splendidly. He has had very good crops, and has just bought a fine piece of ground which he has had his eye upon for a long time. The good fellow is rapidly getting rich, and, by the favor of Heaven, will become one of the wealthiest farmers in the country.

"I am thoroughly satisfied with your other brother-in-law, Chi-kau-go. The boy is not such a blockhead as I had supposed. He has a genius for business. You, who are in every way so superior to him, would not think much of his ability, but it is just the thing for the grocery trade. The amount

of our sales has nearly doubled in the course of six months. You would not know your father's shop, for it is now a very fine store, with bright glass windows, in which the passers-by can see themselves. Our neighbors are bursting with jealousy, which gives me a great deal of satisfaction.

"My dear boy, I am as happy as a man can be on earth. But you are still my greatest joy and my highest pride. It is you who make the family illustrious. We owe it to you that the name of Fo Hi will be spoken in the palaces of Ministers, and will even fall upon the sacred ears of the Emperor. We will all shine in the radiance which you will shed upon us. But accept this advice from your old father: Don't be dazzled by prosperity. Don't spend your money foolishly. Just send it to me. I will invest it for you in our business, and it will bring you in from eight to ten per

cent. This is a good ending for my letter, isn't it?

"Adieu, my dear son. We all embrace you with the warmest love, and pray that fortune may always be faithful to you.

"Your father, Fo Hi."

As he finished reading, the young man impatiently crushed the letter in his hand, and exclaimed: "Money! Money to invest! Fathers have strange ideas, to be sure! I wonder if he thinks that I live on nut shells! I have not even a mouthful for my dinner to-night."

He might easily have found shopkeepers who would have trusted him, or some of his comrades would have loaned him a little money. But, as I have already said, he had not as much breadth of mind as he had loftiness of character. He was proud, and did not want to be in debt to any one. He preferred to pawn his property.

Now in the neighboring village there was a philanthropic institution which did poor beggars the favor to advance funds on good clothing at the rate of twelve per cent. It was gradually growing rich off the spoil of these wretches, but no one could take it ill, for every year the surplus of its profits was turned into the almshouse treasury. Thus it drove people into the poorhouse for the pleasure of providing for them there. It carried on the business of usury in the spirit of charity.

To this obliging pawnbroker our hero went in his distress. He was very much ashamed the first time he went. As he entered the door he hung his head and blushed, and looked about stealthily to see if any one was observing him. But he soon recognized the watch and charms of his Inspector in the hands of one of the clerks, and the sight gave him courage. He thought: "I am not

alone, then." One by one then he pledged all his things except what he actually needed. Even his uniform, his best blue uniform embroidered with silver, was transferred from the wardrobe where it slept carefully, folded between two napkins, to the pawnbroker's storeroom. Here it was hung up on an ignoble nail, like the commonest of old clothes, between the stuffed ape of a mountebank and the greasy cloak of a fakir. To such base uses may we come at last!

The last day of the month, the very day on which his suspension was to come to an end, Fo Hi received an invitation to attend an evening party at the house of his Inspector. But he was unable to go because he had no uniform. His absence was accordingly noticed. The Inspector wrote to the Auditor about it, who in turn forwarded the complaint to the Controller, and this official immediately sent for Fo Hi.

"Sir," he said to the young man in a severe tone, "it is very plain that you are incorrigible. You seem to take delight in exciting the displeasure of your superiors. The Inspector requests me to ask an explanation of your conduct in an important particular. Why, sir, did you deliberately absent yourself from the ball, to which your superior officer in the Department did you the great honor to invite you?"

There was a long pause, during which Fo Hi was intently studying the designs traced on the floor of the apartment. He would be killed on the spot rather than confess the sad truth. But at last the Controller broke the silence by going on angrily:

"You don't answer, eh? Well, sure enough, what answer could you give? What excuse could you make for such singular behavior, which so clearly shows a spirit of

insubordination? You need not suppose that the Inspector looked for your presence to add to the attractions of his party. No, sir. A *soirée* given by a superior is always a brilliant affair, and it would be, even if no one were there. It can easily dispense with everything in the way of ordinary attraction, without detracting from its dignity and brilliancy. At the Inspector's ball there were neither orchestra nor refreshments. But was it any less enjoyable, I should like to know? I was there, sir. I enjoyed myself, sir. It was my duty to do so. And it was your duty also. But you have failed in all your duties. And why? Out of contempt, I have not the least doubt!"

"But, sir!" stammered the poor young fellow.

"You are answering me! I declare, you are answering me! Was there ever anything more disrespectful!"

"But you asked me a question," exclaimed Fo Hi, now exasperated.

"Away, sir! away this moment. I shall report your outrageous conduct to the proper authorities."

A scathing report was forthwith sent to the Minister at Pekin, in which the discharge of Mr. Fo Hi junior was positively demanded. The Superintendent of the office, who received the report, endorsed it carelessly on the margin with a note of approval, and sent it, with a number of others endorsed in the same way, to the Secretary whose business it was to prepare replies. Now it happened that this official was just at this time very much pressed with work. So, in his haste and confusion, he got two of the documents mixed, and in writing the answers he inserted in the one intended for Fo Hi the name of a poor wretch who had applied for a promotion, and in the letter which

was really intended for this unlucky wight he inserted the name of Fo Hi. The Superintendent signed both letters without reading them, the Minister countersigned them, and two months later the Director-in-chief of the Department of Roads at Pi-ho received an answer to his report. But as he read the first words of the communication he rubbed his eyes in amazement. Then he scratched his ear and fell into a profound revery.

"Who would have believed it?" he muttered. "This little Fo Hi is the godson of a third cousin of an Imperial Councillor. They compliment him and appoint him Controller of the first class. His patron must have a great deal of influence. I have made a mistake!"

And thereupon he took his cane and went as straight as an arrow to Fo Hi's apartments. He mounted nimbly the six flights

of stairs, entered without knocking, and grasping the young fellow's hand, exclaimed:

"Well! Good morning, my dear friend! I wanted to bring you some good news in person. For a long time I have recognized and appreciated your worth, but until the present moment I have been unable to manifest my appreciation in any substantial way. You see, sir, you were rather young. But the Minister has at last yielded to my urgent entreaties, and rewarded your services. You are appointed Controller of the first class in one of the important cities in the south, at Song-Kong-Chou. You are to leave in two days. Possibly you are not very well supplied with money. But here is an indemnity of one hundred taëls, which I present you from certain funds at my disposal. Go to the bank and have it cashed to-morrow. They will pay it at sight. Accept my sincerest congratulations, my young friend,

and do not forget that I shall always be delighted to hear of your good fortune. I have started you on the road to success, and you may be sure that I will follow your future with interest. Take heart, my good fellow. Adieu!"

But such was Fo Hi's bewilderment that he could not say a word. "He is a very deep fellow!" thought the Director, who mistook his silence for reserve. "But then he is going a good way off—a good way off!"

But from this time Fo Hi saw around him nothing but smiling faces and friendly looks. His comrades were quite overpowering in their marks of esteem, and his superiors paid court to him as if they wanted to beg his pardon for the past. His uniform, embroidered with silver, he now redeemed, paid all his debts, and slept like a man whose dreams are no longer haunted by his creditors.

The day of his departure, he went to take leave of his Director-in-chief, and during the interview said to him pleasantly:

"Really, sir, I can tell you all about it now. The reason I did not go to the ball to which you so kindly invited me, was simply that my uniform was in pawn."

"Why, dear me!" exclaimed the dignitary regretfully. "If I had only known it!"

He gave his young *protegé* a long and hearty clasp of the hand, and even condescended to accompany him to the carriage where at parting he held him up as an example to his comrades, all of whom had come to bid him farewell. And thus Fo Hí took his departure with a heart full of happiness.

"My poor father! How happy he will be!" he said to himself, as he rode along. You see he was at bottom a good fellow. All these sudden honors might excite his

brain, but they could not corrupt his heart.

The next day, however, all the Surveyors, Controllers and Auditors at Pi-ho received an order to report at the office of the Inspector, where that dignitary, in a quiet but firm voice, read the following circular from His Honor, the Director-in-chief:

"I have learned that certain of the employees in my Department do not hesitate to compromise their uniform by putting it in pawn. This is a very serious breach of discipline. It is highly improper that a costume which the people are accustomed to regard as nothing less than an emanation from His Imperial Majesty himself, should be hung up promiscuously with the rags of the beggar. Mr. Inspector, I order you to give notice to all your subordinates that if I hear again of such scandalous conduct, I shall feel compelled to visit the full severity of the Department upon the head of the offender."

When he had finished reading the paper, the Inspector folded it up respectfully and added on his own account, by way of commentary: "I trust, gentlemen, that you will conform to the views of His Honor the Director-in-chief. They are at once just and paternal. I say they are just, for they bear, like everything which His Honor does, the stamp of justice itself. But I add further, his views are paternal, for His Honor is desirous — I have it from his own lips, and I am happy as well as proud to repeat his words to you — yes, His Honor has himself condescended to tell me, with his own mouth, that he is desirous that his subordinates should never be subjected to the annoyance of being deprived of a costume which is the ornament of their several offices, and the honor of the body to which they have the honor to belong. I am further directed by His Honor the Director-

in-chief to listen to any observations which you may possibly wish to make on this matter, and to transmit them to him. I have, however, answered for you, in advance, to His Honor. I have assured him that it were impossible that any one could oppose an order so reasonable and so explicit, and—"

"Pardon, Mr. Inspector," interrupted a very young man. "When we pawn our clothes it is certainly not for our own pleasure."

"No, sir, it is not, for it is a violation of the rules, and that, to be sure, is no pleasure. Or rather, it is a pleasure for undutiful minds. But the Department has its eye upon them, and if it should be necessary will treat them with a just severity. Let them take notice! Gentlemen, you are dismissed."

But meanwhile Mr. Fo Hi junior was posting along the road to Song-Kong-Chou.

A light heart goes with a full purse. His journey was delightful. He surrendered himself without reserve to the pleasure of surveying the strange scenes which the country offered to his eyes. At evening he rested from his fatigue and dined heartily at some good inn, where he also drank and joked with the servants to his heart's content. Easy digestions make happy dispositions. One day during a halt for refreshments, he noticed at the door of the inn an old man, bald and pale, whose singularly dignified and yet shabby appearance attracted his attention. He accordingly went up to him, and as travellers usually do, asked him whence he came.

"From Song-Kong-Chou," said the old man.

"Is that so!" exclaimed Fo Hi. "Why, that is just where I am going! I am appointed Controller of the first class in the

Department of Roads at Song-Kong-Chou."

The old man in his turn was now very much surprised, and looked so sadly at our hero that the young man in pity asked him if he had any great trouble.

CHAPTER X.

THE STORY OF THE SHABBY OLD MAN.

"ALAS!" answered the old man. "I see now. You are to fill the position for which I applied, and which was due to me for so many reasons. I haven't any ill-will to you, sir, for you are ignorant of the injury which you have done me. But the sight of you revives the sense of my misfortune and aggravates my grief."

And at this the old man burst into tears. The great drops fell from his eyes and rolled silently down his haggard cheeks. The young man was deeply moved by this spectacle, and asked the old man to take dinner with him, after which, when the dessert was brought on, he induced him to tell his sorrowful story.

"It isn't a long story," said the shabby old man. "I am the godson of the third cousin of an influential personage. Under the patronage of my godfather I got into the Department of Roads. Oh! how much better it would have been for me if I had remained in my father's shop and learned his trade! Would to God that I had been a shoemaker, instead of roving about on the public highways! The next thing I did, sir, was to get married; but it would have been better for me if I had tied a stone about my neck and jumped into the river. My wife was a good woman. I haven't any fault to find with her, and even now I don't regret that I married her. She has shared all my misfortunes, and has helped to make them more endurable. But she had very little in her own right. You see it was purely what they call a love-match. With provoking regularity she presented me

with a child every year, until now I have seven, sir.

"With the first we were overjoyed, and gave thanks to Tao who had blessed our union. The second was not unwelcome; at the third we began to think, and we were both wild with vexation when the last one made its appearance. We were unable to feed the other six properly, and now it seemed as if we must literally die of starvation. You know the salary which we get, and you can see for yourself whether nine persons can live on it.

"But my wife is a very courageous woman. So she took it into her head to earn something. She opened a little millinery store. Her two older daughters helped her as well as they could, and the work began to come in very well. But in some way or other, I don't know how, the Director-in-chief was informed that the wife of one of

his subordinates was working with her hands for a living. He immediately sent for me and reprimanded me sharply, saying that I was bringing disgrace upon the Department.

"'But, sir,' I said to him, 'I have children!'

"'What on earth did you have them for?' he replied, gruffly. 'A public officer ought not to have more children than he can feed.'

"He was partly right, I admit. But after all, these poor little things had not asked to be born; it was not their fault that they were here. We certainly could not kill them for the sake of the Department.

"I tried timidly to offer the Director some good reasons for our course. But he assured me, in a peremptory tone which admitted of no reply, that I must take my choice. If I would not obey, he should

give me my discharge. Now what was I to do? I had already been in the Department for fifteen years, and if I were discharged I would lose all my claim to a pension for which I had already labored so long. What employment could I have found elsewhere, if I had abandoned the place which I had taken so much trouble to get? I was too old to take any chances, and I was aware of my incapacity for business. Therefore I submitted. My wife, with tears in her eyes, sent away her customers, and I went on in the old rut, for the sole reason that I had been there for fifteen years. I will not tell you all the humiliations to which I have been subjected in order to get an increase of salary. Fifty taëls is of itself a small thing, but even that small amount would have saved us from starvation. I renounced all my opinions and tastes, and made a point of studying the weaknesses

of my superiors, and flattering their vanity. My wife waited humbly upon their wives, and submitted quietly to all their petty exactions. She voluntarily put herself in chains, which grew tighter every day, without the slightest show of gratitude from these fine ladies for her services. She was their servant-girl minus the wages. I blush yet when I think of these indignities. My heart is full of the mortifications which we have had to put up with, to no purpose. Oh! if I could only spit in their faces! I have a kind heart, sir; I would not harm a fly. But if I had now in my hands one of these heartless men, who take so indifferently the injuries which we have suffered at their hands, I should be delighted to crush the life out of him in my wrath. I would say to him: 'There, you wretch! Take that, for your consequential airs and your bitter sneers. There! take

that, and that, and that, for your scorn, your injurious reports, your absurd fits of rage!'" The old man clenched his fists savagely as he said this, the blood rushed into his face and flamed from his cheeks, and his eyes flashed with excitement. But presently he drank a cup of tea, gradually cooled down, and went on with his story in a calmer tone:

"At last one day we found ourselves at the end of all our resources, surrounded by our children crying with hunger. We had exhausted the means of all our relations and friends, and we were head over ears in debt. My wife and I looked wildly and desperately into each other's faces. Then I thought of my godfather, who fifteen years before had been the cause of all my misfortunes by getting me my position. He felt that he had done all that could be expected of him at that time, and had never

replied to my letters. I now made a last attempt to attract his attention. I sent him a petition which it seemed to me ought to have softened a heart of stone. But fifteen days after I received notice that I was discharged.

"Yes, sir, I was discharged, after fifteen years of faithful service! Discharged for no reason which had any show of sense! His Excellency, the Minister, charged that I had exhibited most remarkable insolence to my superiors! Think of it! I, insolent! alas! I had been only too polite, too humble! My wife was in delicate health, and you can imagine what a blow this was to the poor creature. She immediately took to her bed with a raging fever, but I was compelled to leave her sick and destitute of money. I am now on my way to Pekin, to beg an audience of the Minister, to throw myself at his feet, and to beseech him to grant me

maintenance for my old age, and life for my family."

Fo Hi was deeply affected by this tale. He opened his purse and said to the old man:

"Here! This is Government money. You have certainly a better claim to it than I, who have received it without knowing how or why. Half of it is enough to enable me to finish my journey. Please accept the rest. It is between comrades, you know."

This offer was made with so much frank cordiality that the old man had not the courage to refuse. So he took the money and exclaimed: "You are saving my life. May you be as happy as you deserve! There are still some good-hearted people in the public service!"

"Oh, I don't pretend to very much in that line!" said the young man modestly; and grasping the poor fellow's hand, he took

his seat in the coach. Two days later he arrived at Song-Kong-Chou, and here we shall meet him again in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XI.

SOME GOOD RESOLUTIONS.

SONG-KONG-CHOU is one of the finest towns in the south of China. It is built on a hill, and the houses descend along the gentle slope to the broad plain below, which is itself dotted with residences, scattered here and there amid fruitful gardens which from the distance, look like so many great baskets of verdure. From the highest point of the town the view extends over a wide and rich landscape. One sees vast rice-fields intersected by canals whose waters sparkle in the sunlight like long silver threads. Farms and villas springing up here and there throughout the country relieve and heighten the charm of the scene with their air of rustic neatness. Along the

banks of the river the eye discovers spreading meadows, great green spots in which thousands of purple flowers are blooming. The vision is arrested by a long range of hills, beyond which the horizon widens until it is lost in a shimmering haze.

"What a lovely spot!" cried Fo Hi, charmed with the view. "One ought to be happy here, certainly!"

He was installed in his new office, with all the fitting solemnities, by His Honor the Director-in-chief. All the employees who were to work under his direction were presented to him, and he received them with that air of dignified benevolence which flourishes so naturally on the faces of superior officials. The same day he paid visits to all his departmental chiefs, and to all the upper officers of the other Departments; and when evening came it was with great satisfaction that he reckoned that in his day's

journey he had made one hundred and fourteen reverences at the rate of two reverences to each visit. And finally, he went to sleep, with his spinal column somewhat fatigued, but at any rate very well contented with himself.

Another thing which he did at the beginning of his new labors was to draw up a code of conduct from which he determined never to deviate. And to fasten it more deeply in his memory, he reduced it to aphorisms, which he took the trouble to write down in the form of verses:

I.

To thy superiors homage pay,
And them profoundly do thou greet.

II.

All those who are beneath thy sway,
Harshly and mercilessly treat.

III.

No zeal nor energy display,
Nor work with unbecoming heat.

IV.

Refrain from wedlock till thou'rt gray,
Nor taste of love's delicious sweet.

V.

Temper thy taste for all things gay;
Be in indulgences discreet.

VI.

Let bread and water be thy stay,
Nor rice-wine cause unsteady feet.

VII.

Think thou of nothing night or day
But thy advancement to complete.

Fo Hi wanted to increase the number to ten, and then to sign his name to the paper. But just then he could think of no other injunction. He little thought that events would soon furnish him with the material out of which to complete his decalogue. But he who reads will see, as the proverb says.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW FO HI KEPT HIS POSITION.

In the mean time the shabby old man had arrived at Pekin. For fourteen days in succession, he had gone every morning to the palace of the Minister, and waited in the ante-room. But the only effect of this was that he became known to the attendants, who showed him out, sometimes with insulting speeches, and sometimes with an air of commiseration more cruel even than downright abuse.

At last the wretched man lost his wits. He got it into his head that his only recourse now was to the justice of the Emperor. He therefore took up his station on the Imperial highway, armed with an immense placard on which he had written

in enormous letters: "Your Highness, Justice and Pity." And just as the Emperor was passing, the poor fellow held it out before him, all the time shouting with all his lungs. But at this demonstration one of the attendants signed to two or three policemen, who immediately laid hold of the old man and carried him off to an officer of the peace. Here he related his story with much excitement. The officer apparently listened to him and pitied him. He told him that he would be taken before the Emperor, and put him in charge of some men whom he followed very quietly. One hour later he was confined in a building very closely barred and full of people with wild and haggard faces. Here he was taken with a violent paroxysm of rage, shaking and gnawing at the bars, and howling in his madness. At this two strong men put on him a jacket which confined his arms closely,

and carried him under a sort of faucet from which they turned a stream of cold water on his head. This shower-bath quieted the poor wretch, so that he watched in a stunned sort of way what was going on around him, and allowed himself to be thrown without resistance upon a bed, where he sank into a profound slumber.

Some few months later, a beautiful princess, who was related in the thirty-fifth degree to an uncle of the Emperor, was taken with a fancy to visit a lunatic asylum. She was escorted by a Minister, who supported her very gallantly upon his arm. At the asylum she was received by the Superintendent with all the honors due to her rank and title. She walked through the corridors, and even spoke with some of the unfortunates whom she met in the rooms. But the appearance of the shabby old man especially attracted her attention. At length she drew him into

conversation, and he told her his story so clearly and rationally that the princess seemed to be deeply impressed by it.

"And do you consider this man a lunatic?" she asked, turning to the head physician of the institution.

The doctor bowed, and answered with a very gracious smile:

"I am sure of it, madame, and I am doubtful if he will ever be cured. Insane people who talk rationally are nearly always incurable."

"But I should very much like to make sure whether or not the story which he has told us is true."

"Nothing is easier, madame," replied the Minister, whose turn it was now to speak.

So it was immediately ordered that the archives should be consulted; and there, to the dismay of everybody, was discovered the mistake of which the unfortunate old man

had been the victim. When it was told to the princess she was graciously pleased to laugh very heartily at it, and that very evening she spoke of it to her friends in her drawing-room, all of whom found it exceedingly entertaining. She, however, asked the physician if the poor man could not be released from the asylum, but he protested he could not discharge a patient until he was perfectly and duly cured. She then urged him to show the poor fellow every attention in his power, and spoke of sending a donation of one hundred taëls to the family as indemnity. But the next morning she thought no more about it.

The Minister, however, went home in a furious rage at the jokes of which he had been made the butt. He sent immediately for the Secretary who had made the mistake, and had him impaled before his eyes, to teach him to do his work more carefully.

Then without delay he wrote to Song-Kong-Chou, commanding that a certain rascal by the name of Fo Hi, who had treacherously usurped another man's place, should be discharged instantly. And now it would all have been over with our hero, if his superiors, by a peculiar series of circumstances, had not found themselves compelled to support him, even against the wishes of His Excellency, the Minister.

The road upon which Fo Hi was employed formed at a certain point an angle which was a great eye-sore. It went round a garden which it ought to have crossed to preserve its symmetry. This garden belonged to a well to-do citizen, who cultivated it with his own hands. It was famous for ten leagues around, for the beauty of its flowers, nearly all of which were very rare varieties. The owner was quite proud of his garden, and would not have parted with it

for all the gold in the world. He had only enclosed it with a quickset hedge, so that the passers might have the privilege of the beautiful scene. His chief pleasure was to stand at his window in the morning, looking forth at his flowers sparkling with dew, and breathing their rich perfumes. But one day when he returned home after an absence of a few weeks, he met with a great surprise. He found a large part of his hedge torn up, heaps of stones standing in the midst of his flower-beds, and laborers tearing up the soil with their picks, all for the purpose of running the road directly across his garden. He was so taken aback by this depredation that he thought he should fall down. He rushed out and expostulated vehemently with the laborers, who only sent him to the Controller.

Now we must admit that Mr. Fo Hi, junior, had given his orders rather hastily.

But the indulgent reader must excuse him for the sake of his intentions, which were certainly good. This angle was an eye-sore to him. He said to himself that it would be a great advantage to the public and a great triumph for symmetry, if the road were straightened. And really there never was anything easier. All that was needed was to cut in two this unlucky garden, which interfered so unpleasantly with the right line of the highway. It was not his fault that the owner was an ill-tempered man, who preferred his flowery rubbish to the public good. Thus Fo Hi had reasoned, and consequently had, in the name of the Department which he represented, ordered his men to break through the hedge, and to carry the road on in a straight line. The owner accordingly went, pale with rage, to the Controller's office. Here he was told, in a careless sort of way, that he would have to

apply to His Honor the Director-in-chief, who alone was authorized to make explanations. He therefore went to the Director's mansion, and rehearsed to him, without introduction, and in an excited voice, the substance of his complaint. The Director listened to him politely, and told him that he would address a report to the Home Office on the matter.

"A report!" shouted the civilian, with exasperation, "what do you want of a report? Your men are in my garden, the garden belongs to me—isn't that plain enough? I want none of your tricks! Let them give me back what they are stealing from me—yes, I repeat it, what they are stealing from me! Your Department is a very den of thieves!"

"Sir," said the Director, in a dignified voice, "I will forget the remarks which have just escaped your lips in a moment of anger, and

which you already regret, I have no doubt. You have insulted me in the exercise of my functions, and it might be a very serious matter if it were not that I can bear with and forgive human infirmity. Remember, sir, that the Government in China never commits an error. If it has taken your garden, it is undoubtedly because it has a right to it. Nay, I may say further, because it is its duty to take it."

"We will see about that!" roared the civilian. "I am going straight to a sheriff about it. There are judges in Pekin."

But the road through the garden had already been finished two months, when the Court which took cognizance of the complaint gave its decision. It decided that the affair was a purely governmental affair, with which, consequently, the Court had nothing to do, and that the plaintiff must appeal to the Department of Roads itself to pass judg-

ment upon the right and the wrong of its action. It further suggested that no judge could be found who would understand the business so well as the departmental authorities, because it was entirely within the scope of their jurisdiction, and finally that for estimating clearly the merits of a suit at law there was nothing like being one's self a party to it. But the owner of the garden did not concur in this opinion. He appealed from the decision to the Imperial Council, urgently requesting to be heard by some other tribunal than one composed of the thieves themselves.

Now it was at this very point in the case that the letter reached Song-Kong-Chou, in which the Minister commanded Fo Hi's discharge. The Director-in-chief instantly replied to His Excellency, begging him to reconsider his decision. He explained, with much good sense, that this discharge would have a very

bad effect upon the public, which would attribute it to an entirely different cause. He urged that the Department must back Fo Hi to the very end in this matter, because he had acted as its representative, and to throw him over now would be to throw itself over. His Excellency the Minister readily fell in with these very judicious views, and thus Fo Hi was retained in office for having done a foolish thing in a position from which he was saved from being driven by the foolish behavior of another man.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FAMOUS LAWSUIT.

THE people who want to know everything will ask, probably, what was the conclusion of the lawsuit about the garden. But I am sorry that I can not gratify their curiosity. The suit is still in progress, and the most eminent jurists say that it is nowhere near being ended. The owner gained his cause seven times during his lifetime, in seven different courts, but was never able to recover possession of his property. The Department was always ready with some technical objection, and would not let go its hold. Finally the owner lost patience, and one night had his workmen dig up the part of the road which had cut his garden in two, and re-set the hedge, which, ten years before, had been

illegally torn up. But this only made matters worse. For now the Department brought an action against its adversary, in which it was victorious, and the man was sentenced to pay a fine and to go to prison. He paid the fine, and died in prison, leaving to his children nothing of all the fortune which he once had but a lawsuit to carry on. His oldest son accepted this inheritance piously, and bequeathed it to his daughter, who is now eighty-two years of age, and who is still prosecuting the case with more bitterness and obstinacy than ever. Sixty-eight Directors-in-chief have succeeded one another during these three generations, and not one has weakened for a moment in that long struggle. One of them uttered this memorable sentence, which ought to be inscribed in letters of gold on all the public monuments: "The Department neither dies nor surrenders."

This suit yields an income to a certain number of lawyers, of whose assets it forms an established part. If all the papers which make up the record of the case were to-day gathered into a single pile, they would form a mountain higher than the Altai itself. If those who are now fighting over that piece of ground were to sell it for what it has already cost them, they would have to be paid fifty times its weight in gold. The whole of China might be paved from one end to the other with the taëls which it has cost in the Courts. And yet nothing decisive has been reached! But then it is a matter of principle. By this noble display of obstinacy the Department has inspired the country with a salutary awe. No one dares any longer to oppose its demands. For instance, some time ago it needed a certain mansion to convert into a storehouse. As soon as the owner of the premises

learned that his property was required, he brought the keys to the Director-in-chief, on a silver tray, and thanked him humbly for not taking also the park back of the house. To which that dignitary replied calmly: "That will come bye-and-bye, perhaps."

Our friend Fo Hi was acquainted with no more than the beginnings of this famous suit at law. But he saw enough of it to add to his code of conduct this rule, which was not, however, to be the last:

> All public wishes disobey,
> And practice even the courts to cheat.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE.

THE year 7964 is famous in the annals of China as a year of calamity. This great Empire, which for so many centuries had enjoyed undisturbed prosperity, was now for the first time convulsed by revolution and civil war. The Emperor Hu-o-li XXIV died, leaving the throne to his son Hu-o-li XXV, a young man seventeen years of age, whom he placed under the guardianship of Fi Ho, one of his most confidential councilors. This Fi Ho was noted for his good looks and his great abilities; but he was eaten up with ambition. He had married a niece of the late Emperor, and cherished a secret desire to succeed to the throne.

The accession of the young sovereign inspired China with universal joy. The beginning of a new reign has all the charm of a fine morning with its promise of a cloudless day. Throughout the Empire, the heads of departments assembled all their subordinates, for the purpose of administering to them the oath of allegiance to the new Emperor, which they had formerly taken to his father.

"With all my heart and with both hands," said young Fo Hi. "The Emperor is the Chief Magistrate of my country, chosen by God, and accepted by the nation. I respect him and love him, as every good Chinaman ought. My oath pledges me to nothing which I am not already disposed to stand by. And besides, I can't see for my life why an oath should be required of me more than of that laborer in the street."

"What!" they said to him. "But you are an official! You owe the Emperor a special acknowledgment, for he it is who pays and feeds you."

"Not at all!" replied Fo Hi. "I give my time and labor to the whole nation, which pays me at the hands of the sovereign; which is certainly a very different thing. I am no more bound to the Emperor by the money which he pays me for my labor, than is yonder laborer to the cashier who hands him his wages at the end of the week. As to an oath, there is but one, that I know of, in this world, which any one has the right to ask especially of me. It is the solemn obligation to do conscientiously the work which is given me to do. It is very evident that a silk merchant can not be required to swear that he will keep the roads in good order. But we all owe a common allegiance to the Emperor, just

as we all owe a common obedience to the law. For my part, I am perfectly willing to be faithful to him, and I am astonished that any one should think it necessary to bind me with an oath from which other citizens are exempt."

Now these considerations were undoubtedly very reasonable. But Fo Hi made the mistake of expressing them freely in the hearing of some of his comrades with whom he was intimate. Consequently when it came his turn to take the oath, His Honor the Director-in-chief gave him a black look, and said to him severely:

"Take care, sir! You reason too well ever to be a good official! You do not have for His Majesty the respect—"

"What!" exclaimed Fo Hi vehemently, "I not respect the Emperor! I, who am devoted to him, body and soul! I regard him as the one man who represents my

country to the eyes of foreign nations, and I am as ready to die for him as I would be to yield up my life for her."

"No, sir," replied the dignitary, in a gentler voice. "It is not enough that you should love the Emperor as you love your country, because he is its chief representative. You should have for his person the same devotion which the priest has for his God. These are the sentiments which I profess, and I am sure that no one in this presence will repudiate them."

At these words the four or five hundred officials who were listening attentively bowed like one man, and broke into a simultaneous smile. Those who were standing near Fo Hi moved away one by one as if they were afraid of catching the small-pox. He was just about to launch out into a reply to the position taken by the Director, when

he very opportunely recollected one of old Li-jou-lin's axioms: "The strongest reason is always the best." He therefore controlled his inclination to speak, and signed in silence the form of oath which was placed before him.

That very evening he was in his room quietly smoking a pipe of opium, when the Director's orderly came in and handed him the following circular, to which many of his comrades had already put their signatures:

"My dear Associates! the Providence which guards the destinies of China with such peculiar care has just given us a signal example of its kindness to our glorious country. It has overturned the throne of the late Emperor Hu-o-li, twenty-fifth of that name, whose youth and inexperience were rapidly leading China to destruction.

"For this great and memorable work it has chosen as its instrument the illustrious

Fi Ho. Our affection and our prayers had long since designated him for the supreme power, with which at last he has now been invested by the righteous decree of the Most High. The population of Pekin has already manifested its joy by those shouts and illuminations which mark the depths of national emotion. Shall we, my dear associates, be the last to welcome a change for which our secret wishes have been clamoring for many years? Shall we be the last to attach ourselves proudly to the magnificent destiny which God is preparing for China? No, gentlemen, the time has come for us to show our devotion to the public good and to the Emperor. I expect you to-morrow to take a solemn oath of fidelity to the elect of the people and of God, and I do not apprehend that a single one of you will be wanting in this urgent duty. If among your number there could be

one man capable of such shameful treason, it is very plain that he could not be allowed to wear for another moment the uniform and the insignia which are the marks of honor and fidelity."

"Anything!" exclaimed Fo Hi, with violent indignation, when he had read this document. "Anything! Discharge! Death itself, rather than such baseness! The wretches!"

The blood boiled in his veins, and he walked excitedly about his room, his eyes flaming with resentment, his fists tightly clenched, all the while talking wildly to the furniture as if it could hear and answer him. At length the heat of the room seemed to stifle him. He wanted plenty of air and space in which to vent his feelings. So he went out and wandered about for a long time in the fields, breathing into the air his angry ejaculations and incoherent phrases.

"No," he shouted, "it is impossible. Is it

indeed nothing but an oath which they ask of me? They are as ready to perjure themselves as to eat their meals! Yesterday they took one, and to-day they take another with equal alacrity! This Fi Ho requires us to take an oath to him; but has he shown any regard for his own? Didn't he himself swear fealty to his sovereign, the son of his benefactor? What faith can he have in these empty forms, he who has so basely violated the most sacred thing in all the world? He only wants to degrade us. He relies upon our cowardice. Oh yes, we are cowardly enough! But for my part, I will show him that there are still some spirits whom nothing can humble. I will refuse to take this oath; others will follow my example; and thus the opposition will gradually gain ground until the usurper will tremble on his throne."

The young fellow's imagination, having thus been spurred into full gallop at the very start,

could no longer be controlled. He pictured himself thrown into prison and subjected to torture, but always firm. Then he saw himself led away to execution, and on the steps of the scaffold delivering an impromptu harangue to the populace. This last speech was so touching that presently the mob, wrought up to fury, flung themselves upon the soldiers, rescued him from their custody, and bore him away in triumph.

Fo Hi returned from his evening walk in a very exalted state of mind, and strung up to a high point of heroic sacrifice. He immediately went to all his associates, one after the other, to incite them to resistance, to win them over to his view of the case, and to organize a common opposition to the new dynasty. But everywhere he was confronted with hypocrisy or cowardice. The first man to whom he appealed listened to him distrustfully. He took him for a spy,

and answered him in a cold and yet emphatic tone:

"My dear comrade, I honor and love the great Prince who has just saved China from destruction. I have, therefore, no repugnance to taking the oath which he requires. I am even waiting impatiently for the moment to give a public testimony to my devotion to the new dynasty."

When Fo Hi revealed his plans to another employee, the lady of the house stopped him at the first word. "I beseech you," she said, "not to give my husband any bad advice. The poor man would be only too willing to follow it."

"What!" cried the young man, sadly, "do you, too, talk so—you, who ought to inspire him with courage? Where is the magnanimity of sentiment which is so natural to the feminine heart? It is from you women that man draws his strength and pride! Shall he

then hear from you no more than the advice of a pitiful prudence?"

"Alas, sir!" answered the woman, "that is all very fine talk for you!"

On her lap was a little boy whom she was undressing, and two little girls were clinging to her skirt, looking on with big wondering eyes, without understanding the conversation. The poor mother looked down at the little creatures, and stroking their hair gently, said softly:

"Poor little cherubs! When you become a father, sir, you will listen much more readily to the advice which these dear little curly-heads will give you. If there is any wrong in taking this oath, let it be visited upon those who demand it!"

Fo Hi went away broken-hearted. He succeeded not much better with the rest of his associates. Some of them shared his indignation, but they were all afraid to go any farther.

"A pretty move, indeed!" they said, in reply to his entreaties. "How much weaker will the Government be when we have been thrown out of work? Our resistance will help nobody, and it is certainly very dangerous to ourselves."

"But suppose we should all unite in the opposition?" exclaimed Fo Hi, mournfully.

"Oh, that is a different thing! If everybody resists, then I resist too!" There was no one, however, who wanted to bell the cat. But among Fo Hi's associates there was an old fellow who was very well preserved, and who had always shown great freedom of opinion. To him our hero now went, and said: "You, at least, will not forsake me!" But the old man replied: "My dear boy, I like to see your spirit. It proves to me that we are not yet so utterly rotten as my experience in the service would lead me to think. That is far from disagreeable to me.

I don't know what I might have done at thirty. I was very hot-headed, and it is very likely that I should have acted just as you propose to act. But I should have made a mistake."

"You would have made a mistake?" asked Fo Hi, incredulously.

"Why, to be sure! my dear boy. It would have been better, perhaps, to have chosen a private profession, instead of accepting employment from the Government. But when the choice is once made, you must submit to the consequences of a position from which there is no escape. After all, the ruling power asks of you only what it is very natural it should ask. It does not want its employees to exert themselves to undermine and destroy its existence. It requires you to promise under oath that you will not be hostile to it. And it is right, and there is no dishonor in your taking the

oath which it asks. Have you any hostile designs upon the Government? Of course you haven't. You don't like it, you have a very low opinion of it, but you don't intend to overthrow it. You can do nothing either for it or against it. Why refuse, then, an oath which you must necessarily keep, even if you don't take it?"

"And why, then," exclaimed Fo Hi, "if this oath is as indifferent a thing as you say, why has the mere thought of it stirred up my feelings so strongly?"

"Because you are only thirty. I am very nearly sixty, and I estimate things by reason more than by sentiment. I shall take the oath which they demand, without enthusiasm and without indignation. It is simply an empty formality to which I am submitting. I have no idea of losing all my rights to a pension which I have earned by forty years of hard work. The Government, which

has my money in its pocket, will not pay it to me unless I pronounce a certain word, which is nothing but a mere ceremony to me. Therefore I say it without parleying, with the pistol at my head. I prefer to do that rather than be compelled some day to die of starvation, while shouting 'Stop, thief!' I certainly couldn't shout very loud in that condition. Go, my dear boy, and follow my example, and pocket your scruples, as Panurge says."

CHAPTER XV.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

Fo Hi returned to his lodgings with his determination greatly shaken. Night, that mother of sage counsels, suggested some thoughts to him which were the reverse of heroic. He said to himself that an individual display of resistance would amount to nothing, and that it would be very foolish to sacrifice everything to a mere point of overstrained honor. He asked himself what would become of him after this new freak. Penniless, friendless, with no protector, two hundred leagues from his family, unfitted for manual labor, and not knowing what to do, he would be an object of derision, or of pity. And then what would his brothers-in-law, to whom he had so

magnificently promised his protection, think of him?

And so when morning came he was very much cooled down. Nothing remained of the extraordinary excitement of the evening before but that tired feeling which follows the great tempests of the soul. With a dejected air he went to the official mansion where the ruin of his honor was to be consummated. His Honor the Director-in-chief waited until all the officials had assembled, when he entered, radiant and dignified, and read in a loud voice the form of oath to which each one had to respond in turn with the sacred words "I swear it." It was very curious to see the different ways in which the various officials pronounced this short sentence. Some rolled it out in a strong, bold voice, which seemed charged with conviction; others uttered it in a nonchalant sort of way, as if it were a matter of as

little importance as asking the time of day of one of their associates; while still others pronounced it in the surly tone of a man who is performing a disagreeable task. When Fo Hi's turn came, he felt the inward mutterings of a final protest, and it was only by a strong effort of will that he was able to lift his hand and hold it out. The perspiration poured down his forehead in great drops, and it seemed as if those three unlucky words would tear his throat out, as he uttered them in a choking voice. And when at last they were spoken, he fell back in his seat, and hid his face in his hands as if to hide from his sight the shame of what he had done. His vexation was so marked that everybody noticed it, and especially the Director-in-chief.

They had all signed their names to the document, and the assembly was about to be dismissed, when a messenger came in with a letter

for His Honor the Director. The dignitary took it and opened it immediately, and as he read it a remarkable change came over his face. But he gradually recovered his self-possession, and at length said:

"Gentlemen, I bless the good fortune which assembles you about me at this time. I am proud to be the first to announce to you an item of intelligence which ought to overwhelm us all with delight. The Providence which watches with such special care over the destinies of China, has just given us a signal example of its kindness to our glorious country. It has overturned the throne of the usurper Fi Ho, whose violence and audacity were rapidly leading China to destruction. It has restored the sceptre to the legitimate hands of our young Emperor, the incomparable Huo-li XXV. The population of Pekin has already manifested its joy by those universal

shouts and illuminations which mark the depths of national emotion. Shall we, my dear associates, be the last to welcome a change toward which all our hopes went out? Shall we be the last to attach ourselves proudly to the magnificent destiny which God is preparing for China? No, gentlemen, the time has come for us to show our devotion to the public good and to the Emperor. Let us all, on the spot, enthusiastically swear allegiance to our sole legitimate sovereign."

And thereupon the whole company took the oath again. But as the irrepressible Fo Hi was about to affix his signature to this new document, he observed to the Director-in-chief:

"Your Honor, would it not simplify matters to have a form of oath with a movable heading? This could be changed with each revolution, and we should thus be saved

the inconvenience of re-signing our names so frequently."

"Really, sir," roared the dignitary, who was now fairly furious; "really, sir, you are animated by a most detestable spirit! You trifle with the most sacred things. I do declare, sir, you are making sport of an oath!"

And so Fo Hi, when it was all over and he was safe in his room, added to his code of conduct the following aphorism, which the circumstances of the day had amply illustrated:

> With every change of rulers, say
> New oaths, their favors to entreat.

CHAPTER XVI.

FO HI VENTS HIS SPLEEN ON THE GROCER'S BOY.

At the end of eight days Fo Hi received a letter which he recognized by its shape and seal as an official communication. He therefore opened it with trembling hands and read as follows:

"Sir:—His Excellency the Minister directs me to inform you that you are dismissed from the position which you now hold. You will go to Fei-out-chi, as a Surveyor of the third class, as you can see by the enclosed appointment. I hope, sir, that this punishment may be a lesson for you, by which you will profit. You have not that submissive spirit which is the chief merit of a public official. In all your acts, and even in your most ordinary utterances, you affect a

systematic contempt which amounts almost to rebellion. I give you notice, in the name of His Excellency the Minister, that if you do not make a change in your behavior the Department will be forced to use extreme measures with you and dismiss you forever from its employ."

The letter was signed by His Honor the Director-in chief. Fo Hi squeezed it disrespectfully into an unrecognizable mass, sat down at his writing-desk, and without a moment's delay prepared the following reply:

"To His Honor the Director-in-chief:—I will save the Department the trouble which it would most certainly have to take in a few months. I send you herewith my resignation. You have expressed it very well: I have still a little spirit left, and I am not cut out to be a public official. I have acted in that capacity already too long. It is much better to die of hunger

than to eat bread so hard and purchased so dearly."

This he signed, and without giving himself time for reflection, sent it off. That very evening he was sent for by the Director-in chief, who received him with great affability, and said to him:

"My young friend, in the first heat of passion you have written me a letter which is not very becoming. I might have sent it directly to His Excellency the Minister. But I preferred to show some leniency in the case, for you are not bad at heart. Here is your letter. I give it back to you. I consider your resignation as not having been presented."

Mr. Fo Hi, junior, made a motion as if to refuse it, but the Director went on, in the tone of a kind-hearted patron:

"Listen to me, my young friend. There is still time enough to send in your resig-

nation. If you persist in your resolution, bring it back to me in two days from now. I hope that you will have thought better of it by that time. I know very well that the life of a Government officer has its annoyances, and just now you are experiencing them a little too keenly. But you forget the bright side of official life, which you will see better when your mind is more composed. The advantage of belonging to a powerful body, which never leaves you in the lurch, the respect which is called forth by your uniform wherever you go, the comfort of an existence insured against all accidents by a modest but regular salary, the certainty of a pension which will put your last days beyond the reach of want, the very hope of advancement which one always gets when he deserves it—here certainly are more than enough advantages to outweigh all the annoyances. Think of all this, my young

friend, before taking a resolution which your own family would probably not sanction, and which you will be sorry for at some future time. You know very well what you lose by quitting us; and on the other hand, do you know what you will meet with outside of the service? Weigh carefully all these considerations, and come and see me again in twenty-four hours. And meanwhile I will tear up your letter, since you will not take it back."

"My resolution is irrevocable," said Fo Hi.

"Very well! very well!" replied the Director, with a smile. "We shall see!" And he dismissed the young man in the most amicable manner.

Now Fo Hi was in the habit of passing every day, on the way to his office, a grocery store which reminded him of his father's. In the store there was a boy with

a good-natured face, who had gotten into the habit of saluting our hero every morning. Fo Hi returned his politeness with a slight nod, and sometimes even condescended to speak to him, when he found him on the doorstep, and when he was himself in a good humor.

"Fine weather," he would say to him.

"Yes, fine weather, Mr. Fo Hi," the boy would answer. "But the air is quite sharp."

The boy was very proud of this distinction. He respected Fo Hi and envied him at the same time. The wonderful coral button hurt his eyes at the same moment that it fascinated them. In the way in which he lifted his fur cap, one could see very clearly great deference mixed with something of vexation. There was no mistaking the meaning of that salute. The boy meant to say: "The happy man, who draws his pay every month without fail, and who never puts up packages

of pepper! This evening he will go to the ball at the Governor's, and probably will be allowed the honor of tapping him on the stomach, as is done in the higher classes. He has his particular place in the public ceremonies and in the procession of Juggernaut. He is something in the world, and I lift my fur cap to him instead of his lifting his silk cap to me. Happy man!"

Now ordinarily the boy's salutation pleased Fo Hi. But he was in such a state of mind on his return from the interview with the Director, that the sight of this silly fellow raising his cap to him gave him a sharp pang; so he went up to him, and in a very exasperated tone, as if he were talking to himself, said to him:

"You bow to me, do you? You bow to me! What a mockery! Keep your hat on, my friend. It is I who ought to take off my cap, and bow to the very ground to you."

At this singular speech the boy opened his big eyes very wide, and continued standing with his hat in his hand, his mouth open, and a look of amazement on his face. And Fo Hi went on, with much energy: "Yes, it is for me to bow to you, for you are free and I am not. When your work is done, you owe nothing more to your employer, and can go to bed and sleep peacefully. But I! I have twenty employers, twenty superiors who are paid by the Emperor to torment me. They all want to earn their wages, and they do their work zealously. Dynasties change without requiring anything of you. You go on selling your rice and your pepper, without troubling yourself about them. But they have a claim upon my allegiance because they support me. They compel me to swear my fealty, and I have taken three oaths in the same day. No, don't bow to me, my friend. Keep on your cap. For the

work which you are doing is of some use. You know it is useful, and the knowledge encourages and sustains you. You believe in the sugar which you crush, and so you go on crushing it the more heartily. But as for me, my friend, I am weighed down every day with a task which is consuming my strength, and yet which is of no use to anybody. I am passing the best days of my life, these days which are gliding by to return no more,—I am passing the flower of my life in counting stones by the roadside, and in blackening reams of paper for the rats to gnaw. I am only a machine which goes round and round to no purpose.

"You don't know anything, do you? You have scarcely been taught to read and write. Well, console yourself. Ignorance is not stupidity. Every day I am sinking lower than the most ignorant. I am turning into an idiot. I am conscious of it, and I weep

with rage over it. All the petty passions are getting possession of me. I am acquiring a taste for paltry artifices. Yes, I am lost. I dare not look my conscience squarely in the face, because I should recognize there a horrible depth of hatred. Hatred of whom? Oh! Good Heavens! Hatred of anybody and everybody,—hatred of these Directors, who torment me with their miserable arrogance, and pass on to me, with such manifest satisfaction, the kicks which they themselves have already received,—hatred of my work, which I do without pleasure, because I do it without definite purpose—hatred of you, sir! yes, even of you, you great simpleton, who are silly enough to bow to me every morning. No, indeed, don't salute me. Keep your cap on. You envy me for going to the Governor's ball. But do you know that I am not at liberty to stay away if I feel like it? Do you know

if I were not there to put up smilingly with the little patronizing attentions of Madame, the Governor's wife, there are kind souls who would take quick note of it, and that their note of it would be bad? I have my own place in the procession of Juggernaut. But don't you see that I am between two rows of soldiers, just like a criminal who is being taken to prison? It is for me to salute you, my friend. You were born in this district, and you will make here a respectable fortune. Here also you will die, surrounded by your own people, and mourned by some of them. But I wander about from town to town unable to stay anywhere. Without notice I am sent from one end of China to the other, without the first cent with which to pay my travelling expenses. And I shall die as I live, wretched and friendless, at a hundred leagues from the town in which I was born. Pity me, my

good fellow. I am more to be pitied than envied. Or rather, pity *us*. For all of us, poor officials, are in the same predicament. Look at that magistrate who is now passing. He is a Councillor. Your employer bows to the ground for him, but he would not trust him for a dollar. Do you see that splendid looking officer yonder? His epaulettes alone cost him a whole year's salary. He will never buy a villa with his savings. He makes a very fine show, but the people with whom he trades can tell you something about that. The Government crumbles its budget for the Public Service very fine, that it may go further. But in the end nobody is satisfied, neither the employees nor the Government. The scanty salaries on the one hand are responded to by scanty work and scanty gratitude on the other hand. Don't ever ask for your piece of the cake, and just put your cap on your head and keep it there."

CHAPTER XVII.

A FAMILY REUNION.

THERE is nothing for relieving vexation like giving vent to it in words. One of the illustrious talkers of the Western World, the great Cicero, consoled himself for the death of his daughter, whom he loved devotedly, by writing a great book on his sorrow. So our hero experienced a sense of comfort when he had poured his troubles into the large ears of the grocer's boy. He began to look less bitterly at the destiny which had fallen to him. Little by little he became reconciled to the idea of remaining an official. He did not re-write the letter which his Director had destroyed, but after having thanked him for his leniency he started for his new post of duty.

To reach Fi-out chi, his future home, he had to pass through the district in which he was born. He had at first made up his mind not to stop, for he felt a secret humiliation at exposing his disgrace to the eyes of those who had seen him depart full of hope and expectation. But when he saw in the distance the gilded roof of the pagoda which had cast its shadow upon the sports of his childhood, he could not withstand the sight. His heart melted, and turning into the town he leaped from the coach, and in a few moments fell into his father's arms, who hugged him in amazement. Fo Hi junior did not dare to confess the sad truth to the old gentleman who looked so proud of him. He talked to him vaguely of a change of place, and of promotion, but the old fellow was too elated not to take his word for it. He took his son around to all his neighbors, friends, and acquaint-

ances without exception. And the admiration and envy which the poor boy saw reflected on everybody's face, were balm to his wounded pride. His sisters and brothers-in-law *naïvely* regarded him as a superior sort of man, and showed him a great deal of deference. Pe-ka-o, especially, was overjoyed when he heard that so important a personage as Fo Hi junior was actually coming to spend eight days at his farm, and it afforded him much satisfaction to take him over his estate which was of considerable extent.

"You learned fellows have other pleasures," he said to the young man, "but I doubt if they are any keener than ours. It is a great and deep pleasure to know that the ground on which you are walking belongs to you. I am absolute master here. These fields belong to me just as China belongs to the Emperor. I can do whatever

I please, and am accountable to God alone who is the Lord of all men. And then I have another pleasure, at which undoubtedly you will laugh. But it is really a pleasure to see my land steaming under the plough-share which turns over the sod in wide furrows. The first little spears of green grass which break slowly through the black clods, throw me into ecstasies of which you can have no idea. I go out very early in the morning when the blue mists are still hanging over the land, and take a look at my fields and meadows. They all know me and smile when they see me, for they are my friends. I look about to see how many fresh stalks have come up in the night, and everything sends forth a rich fragrance which intoxicates my senses. My neighbor's land has not for me that sweet and whole-some smell. No, it is the peculiar fragrance of ownership. Then again the harvest is

a time of festivity with us. The farm is full of laborers who cheer each other on, alike in their work and in their mirth. I take the lead proudly in everything. The sun beats hotly on the reaper as he swings his sickle through the tall wheat, but he wipes the perspiration from his forehead with his sleeve and keeps at it, and when evening comes, he breathes with full lungs the cool breeze which dries and refreshes him. You see those oxen down there lazily feeding in the high thick grass which almost buries them. It is a fine sight when they come home, drawing with their strong necks the heavy wagon on which the yellow sheaves are piled high. Behind walk the harvesters with their sickles on their shoulders shouting and singing cheerily. The good wife has the supper ready for them in the farmhouse, and I sit down at table with them and make them merry with a

glass of wine. And then they sleep as heartily all night as they have mowed all day. You would hardly believe how fond these people are of me. Next to the Emperor they think more of me than of anybody on earth. I am always looking after their wants, and am fully repaid for my pains by their respect and affection. I am a little ashamed to say it, but I am King on my estate, and I am as happy as a king. My neighbors' affairs do not trouble me, and those of the Empire interest me only in so far as I am, above all things, a good Chinaman. I confess that I don't care much whether it is John or Paul who governs the country. Rulers have often changed, fortunately, but the sun never changes. No, he is always on hand at the right time to ripen my grain, and that's all that I ask. And your sister thinks just as I think. She appears to be very happy, and her happiness

adds still more to my own. She has already twice made me a father, and we have not enough of the little fellows yet. Children are no expense in the country, you know. But the oldest one belongs to you, my friend. You understand very well that we don't want to make a farmer of him like ourselves. You shall take charge of his education, and you shall then start him and lead him onward in the splendid career which you are yourself pursuing so honorably."

"Oh! certainly, certainly," answered poor Fo Hi in a slightly patronizing tone. "Of course this kind of life would not be suitable for my nephew. Don't be uneasy. I will see to it."

Now the oddest thing about this conversation is that both men were in earnest. Neither of them saw how monstrously foolish it would be, on the one hand for a father

to drive his son away from a life, the comforts of which he knew so well, and on the other hand for an uncle to launch his nephew into a profession in which he had himself found nothing but thorns. But the human mind is so constituted that it moves with the greatest ease in the midst of the most stupendous contradictions without ever seeing them.

Fo Hi junior was to remain a whole week in the country. The novelty of things made the first day agreeably short. The second, however, seemed a little long to him and a little dull. On the third day he grew restless, and on the fourth he began to yawn. At last, on the fifth day he stretched his limbs wearily and said to himself: "Really, one must be accustomed to the country to find much pleasure in it. I should die of *ennui* in this land of boors." So he packed his trunk, bade the family an

affectionate farewell, and returned to the city to visit his brother-in-law, the wholesale grocer. He found this worthy man nailing up some large boxes, and all the while singing at the top of his voice. Chi-kau-go usually sang at his work to keep up his spirits.

"Well, I declare! Is this the way you do business?" said Fo Hi to the merry fellow as he slapped him on the shoulder.

"Is this the way we do it? Well, I should say it was! We are not strong-handed enough, and so your father and I work nights. We are in want of good clerks and we have to pay absurd prices for them. I have just engaged one who has no experience at all, and yet I give him a thousand taëls a year."

At this figure the young official started in surprise, for it was just double the amount of his yearly salary, and he a

man with a coral button, and an ex-king of the future.

"And I shall soon have to raise his wages," continued Chi-kau-go. "But I don't complain. I would give him one half more if I could only trust him thoroughly. Oh yes, there is money to be made in our business! But then you must work for it. Now, how much better off you are. You live at your ease, without much of anything to do. You have a good salary, regularly paid, and you haven't to lie awake thinking of bills falling due. And besides, you can wear a silk cap, which, to my mind, is one of the most desirable things in the world. But see here, I want that last little fellow of mine to do as you have done. He is a bright boy, full of spirit and ready with all sorts of funny speeches which make his mother and myself split our sides laughing. Of course I don't mean to say that he

will get as high up as you. But if you will give him a shove, he will make his way with the best of them. It's for him that I am working. Twenty years from now the business will be worth a good deal of money, and then we shall sell out. And as sure as I live it shall all be his some day."

"Very good! You can count on me to do the right thing by him," said Fo Hi with an assuring gesture.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN WHICH OLD LI-JOU-LIN TURNS UP AGAIN.

"WELL, I declare! Is that you?" exclaimed Mr. Fo Hi, senior, one day as he let in old Li-jou-lin. "How long it is since we have had a sight of you! Where have you come from now?"

"From Japan," answered the old philosopher.

"From Japan? What an idea, to go to Japan!"

"Well, there was a very handsome young man in Pekin, who parted his hair in the middle so beautifully that he was a particular favorite of the wife of a high officer of the Imperial Household. He had but a single fault. He was rather too fond of the society of some young ladies who were not

received at Court. This displeased the great lady, and she spoke about it to the Minister. This dignitary, with his usual fatherly benevolence, sent for the young man, gave him a scientific mission to Japan, and selected me to accompany him. I did the work, and the young man drew the salary. He was rewarded for the journey with the Cross of the Order of Merit, and I with a book in which he will sign his name. I am delighted that I have been able to study so closely the customs and the laws of a people with whose great writers only I was formerly acquainted. Even the admirers of female beauty have their good points, and the Ministers who reward them are very obliging gentlemen!"

This speech was not very clear to Mr. Fo Hi, who was listening with his mouth wide open. But when two persons are conversing, if one of them understands, that, of itself,

makes things very entertaining. But Li-joulin turned the conversation by asking: "And how are matters with your son, Mr. Fo Hi?"

At this question the worthy tradesman jerked up his head like a horse who feels the cut of the whip and starts into a quick trot. For half an hour without stopping he went on talking about the merits, the virtues, the success, and the hopes of his son. When the good soul once took a start, it was for no short run. The old philosopher had no thought of stopping him. He was busy trying to make out the truth amidst this torrent of words, all the time rubbing his chin with the palm of his hand, while his little eyes sparkled maliciously.

"What a happy father you are!" at length he broke out. "A truly happy father! Do let me have a little conversation with this dear child."

So he carried Fo Hi off for a walk, for the young man was not unwilling to go. He took him to a hill from which the eye commanded an extended view. On one side could be seen the busiest streets of the town, in which the old man pointed out to his companion the inhabitants, who looked like so many little black ants, hurrying about in every direction, each intent upon his own business. On the other side the vision ranged over the open country where in a secluded ravine could be descried a large building from which, at intervals, the wind brought the sound of machinery in motion. Here Li-jou-lin pointed out the laborers who were coming out of the building, bending under the weight of the heavy burdens which they were carrying on their shoulders. And here and there in the spreading plain were men holding the plough and guiding the bright share through the steaming earth.

"Does not this scene of busy activity give you pleasure?" he asked of the young man.

"Oh! certainly, certainly!" answered Fo Hi, who was, really, quite indifferent to the whole thing.

"Yes," continued the old man, "labor is beautiful. There is nothing so good and so beautiful on earth."

Then turning suddenly to the young man he asked him point-blank:

"Why is it that you do nothing?"

"Nothing? Why, I have a profession which does not leave me a single spare moment!"

"Yes, you are busy but you do not work. To work is not merely to fill a few hours of life with some kind of occupation. In that sense, of whom could it be said, that he does not work? We are always doing something, even if it be no more than threading pearls. That only is work, in the

true sense of the term, which has an end in view, and that end the highest which could be presented to human activity, the great end of making free both him who works, and those who are born of him. To emancipate one's self and one's posterity from the miseries of servitude, that is the true and only *work*. Look at that man down there who is bending over the soil, and who appears to be working in it so industriously. I am acquainted with him. He commenced life as a farmer's boy. He drudged long for other people that he might lay up, little by little, enough to buy a bit of land. At last he accomplished his object and became a landed proprietor. And now he is anxious to enlarge his estate. He is thinking of his oldest son, who will take up the work where the father lays it down, and who by continually adding to it will make of this little corner a great and rich domain. This man

is laying the foundation of an estate and a dynasty. He is becoming a king, and a father of kings. He is working.

"And your father is working also, my dear boy. He began in a stall, where I saw him for many years engaged in selling rice by the handful to the passers. The stall at last changed into a shop, and then the shop into a large store, and now Mr. Fo Hi, senior, is one of the principal merchants of the place. He has established a large business. He is thinking that one of these days his son-in-law, instead of his son, will inherit it to pass it on down to his grandchildren. Thus he has, little by little, risen out of servitude, and is at the same time emancipating his posterity. This again is real work.

"But as for you, my friend, what end have you in view? You will do to-morrow just what you did yesterday. You will do the

same thing again every day in the week, and will still be doing it ten years from now, with no hope of any good result. What do you expect to found? Will you ever be free? If you should ever have children will you bequeath them that inestimable good, liberty? No, they will enter upon the career which you have pursued, at the very point from which you yourself started, and with just as little result for themselves and for their children. You will have passed through the world like a summer torrent which leaves behind it a dry bed. The life which you are leading is of no use to anyone. It is disastrous to yourself, for it is undermining and gradually destroying the intelligence which God has given you."

Just here Fo Hi made a motion as if to interrupt him, but the old philosopher continued with an air of authority:

"Let me finish what I am saying. Yes,

my dear boy, your faculties are growing weaker every day. In the end they will be completely extinguished, and you will have come to that point of moral insensibility, where you will not even regret the loss. Independent work refreshes and nourishes the soul. It requires the continuous exercise of originating power, and the unceasing application of all the energy of the will. And this vigorous exercise makes the mind grow, and preserves the flexibility and vigor of that active energy which is within the man, and which spurs him on to great enterprises. But what you are doing requires from you no effort of the mind, nor even of the body. You are harnessed to your work, and you go on your way, with your head down, looking neither to the right nor to the left, with melancholy indifference performing your day's work, which rolls on without a jolt in an interminable rut. Is this what it is to work?"

"Now, don't you know very well," replied Fo Hi, with a forced smile, "that if every one were to reason as you do the Government would have no one to attend to its business?"

"Would to God! Would to God!" exclaimed Li-jou-lin. "Then, perhaps, the Government would not meddle with what does not concern it. It would not assume charge, at so much expense of time and money, of so many enterprises which it conducts with such poor success. It would leave to the citizens the business of constructing roads, of digging canals, of making cigars, of teaching children, of preaching morality to men, and of doing a thousand other things which they understand infinitely better than does the Government. It would not look after everybody's cows, and the cows would be all the better taken care of, for that very reason. It would be

satisfied to regulate and to maintain the dignity of the Empire abroad, and its tranquillity at home. And for this, its legitimate business, only a small number of employees would be necessary. These it would find readily among those, who, having no longer any need to devote their energies to their own private affairs, would be free to devote themselves to the affairs of the public. It would intrust them with important and difficult business, and would pay them accordingly. And these men would be the chief men in the State, not merely for the honor which would attach to their functions, but for their own personal merits. It would be understood that to fulfill their trust, to render to the country the services which she expects of them, they would need more intelligence, more courage, and more energy even than their ancestors had shown in setting them free by making them rich."

"What a dream!" said Fo Hi, shrugging his shoulders.

"Do you think so, my friend? And yet, I tell you, I have just come from a country where this dream is a great and beautiful reality. We are separated from the Japanese people by a mere arm of the sea. But to see how different their ideas and methods are to ours, one would say that the vast Pacific lay between the two countries. There men have a single thought in life. It is to found an estate and a dynasty which will keep it. They work with their eyes fixed on the future. The son succeeds the father, and continues his work, as he perpetuates his name with unconquerable perseverance from generation to generation. Thus it is that the great houses rise little by little from nothing. The labor of generations accumulates gradually until the happy day when the whole family is concentrated in one

scion, in whom are collected the rich results of three or four centuries, and who, liberated henceforth from his own affairs, devotes himself to the public, and has no longer any other interest than that of the state."

"Ah! hold on there!" objected Fo Hi, "Your Japanese are then assured, by some special favor, of never having more than one child, are they?"

"Not at all. But they have but one heir."

"And do you think that just?"

"This is the price at which alone you can have liberty," said the old man, solemnly. "Is it too dear a price to pay for that most precious of all good things? It is folly of the worst kind to think that liberty can balance itself in the air like the sparrows, without anything to rest upon. If it has no support in men whose sole business it is to defend and maintain it, it falls to the ground

and is shattered into fragments. There is no liberty without an aristocracy."

"All men are equal," said the young man, in an oracular tone.

"Yes. But true equality does not necessitate the abolition of privileges. Some of these are indispensable, and some are only expedient; but true equality asks that all privileges should be accessible to all men alike."

CHAPTER XIX.

IN WHICH A NEW CHARACTER APPEARS ON THE SCENE.

THE next time Li-jou-lin called on Mr. Fo Hi, senior, he found there a man whose appearance and dress at first surprised him. It was easy to see, by the whiteness of his skin and the peculiarity of his features, that he was a European. He had a hat with a brim which was very wide at the front and back but which curled up at the sides, and when he took off this hat a shining bare spot was seen on the top of his head, as round and white as a double taël of silver. The hair grew thickly all around it, and reached down to the forehead, which was quite covered when the locks were smoothed down. He was dressed in a

long black robe, and had a kind of bib hanging about his neck, which could hardly be of any other use than to wipe his mouth upon. He spoke Chinese with difficulty. But old Li-jou-lin, who had lived in Canton for two years, knew enough English and French to make himself understood in both of these languages. After thinking for a few moments, he concluded that this strange guest must be one of those Catholic Missionaries of whom he had frequently heard and of whose doings he had read in the French newspapers. So he greeted him cordially. For he liked anything which looked like courage, and it certainly requires courage to cross the seas, and to go, sustained by faith alone, to preach an unknown God to people who are regarded as barbarians. The missionary quickly saw that he had to do with an honest and educated man, and began to converse frankly with him. He

complained of the persecutions inflicted upon those who were bringing the Gospel to the Celestial Empire, and in vigorous terms taxed the Emperors with blindness, injustice, and cruelty.

"But," said old Li-jou-lin, in answer to these complaints, "if I should take a notion to go to your country with a dozen Chinese priests, for the purpose of preaching our God openly to your people, how would you receive us?"

"Oh! the case is not supposable!" was the priest's reply.

"Let us, however, assume it, and answer my question."

"Alas!" said the man in the black robe, raising his eyes to heaven. "Nowadays they would merely throw you into prison. But two hundred years ago, in the good old times, they would very justly have burned you alive in the public square,

for the glory of God and the edification of your fellow-creatures. It would have been a very cheering spectacle to the eyes of the faithful."

"I don't doubt it at all," replied the philosopher. "But you ought not to think it strange if you are treated here as we should be treated in your country!"

"Oh! But it is a very different thing! We are bringing you the truth!"

"The truth! How do you know that?"

"Because God himself has revealed it to us."

"What! Do you think that God has not revealed it to us also?"

"How can you talk of your God, who is only a false God?"

"Well, I will not say as much of yours," responded Li-jou-lin, very politely, "for I regard all the Gods as true who counsel men to live rightly, and I know of none who give any other counsel."

"Is this what your God does?" cried the missionary, "when he teaches you to throw your new-born children to the swine?"

Now Li-jou-lin was a philosopher, but he could not suppress a sign of indignation at this horrible charge. Indeed, his countenance showed his feelings so plainly that all those who were sitting by eagerly asked him what it was that the man in the black robe could have said. So he translated to them the missionary's words, at which they were all filled with horror and disgust. But when the first rush of feeling had subsided, the philosopher replied, in a calmer but still agitated voice:

"This is a terrible calumny, and very easily charged upon a people with whom you are but imperfectly acquainted. May your God forgive you for it! It is true, there are unnatural mothers in China, as there are everywhere else. Have you none

in your country? Alas! I used to read your newspaper sometimes when I lived in Canton. And what did I see? How many poor children drowned, smothered, roasted, buried alive, and even thrown to unclean animals! How many mothers guilty of slaughtering their offspring! How many murders committed in cold blood, and sometimes with the most refined ingenuity of barbarity and with the most incredible cruelty! The records of your courts are crimson with the blood of these poor little things; and if one can judge by the number of the guilty who are brought to justice, how many more there must be who escape the hands of the law! For this kind of crime easily hides itself in the dark, and many of them will never break the silence in which they lie buried until the moment when God will bring them to light at the last great day. But is it right,

because in a nation of a hundred millions of people there are a few monsters, to accuse the whole nation of such crimes, and include all its inhabitants in one sweeping aspersion of guilt? Believe me, sir, the women of our land have feelings as well as your women in Europe. They also look upon it as a blessing from Heaven, when they have the happiness of becoming mothers. They would give their lives for the children whom they have brought into the world. Those who have told you different have deceived you abominably."

"You are vexed with them unjustly," replied the missionary, in a benevolent and penitent voice; "those who have brought these reports are pious people, who were inspired only by a praiseworthy charity. Their stories have excited the compassion of Catholic nations. And all the faithful have banded together to rescue these poor

children who are devoted, by the misfortune of their birth to the tusks of the swine and the flames of hell. Every week they give a small sum of money for their poor little fellow creatures in China. These small contributions are continually accumulating in our hands, and at the end of the year they amount to a very considerable sum. We use it, in accordance with the intention of the contributors, to buy up those of your children whom their mothers abandon."

"And have you bought many of them?"

"Well, no, I have not yet had that pleasure."

"And I hope that you will never have it. Let me tell you, sir, to keep your pity and your money for your own unfortunates. I am told you have not a few of them at home. You will have enough to do to feed your own poor. After you have done

that, you may think of ours if you want to; but meanwhile we will take care of them ourselves. As for our children, we do not sell them at any price, and the money which is given for that purpose is money thrown away."

"It is not thrown away on everybody, however," muttered the missionary.

Fo Hi, junior, at the end of this remarkable conversation went up to the philosopher, and pointing to the man in the black robe, who had taken his hat and was bowing himself out, said in a low voice:

"This man, who crosses the sea, who exposes himself to a thousand dangers and faces a thousand privations to carry to strangers the Gospel of his God—do you dare to say that this man is not working? And yet he is founding nothing. He has no family, and never will have any."

"Yes," said Li-jou-lin, "there are men

who have no family but humanity. They are artists, scholars, priests. They are founding the kingdom of justice and truth among the nations of the earth. I know of no grander nor better work!"

"Suppose, then, that I should become an artist?" asked the young man eagerly.

But the philosopher smiled, and tapping him playfully on the cheek, replied: "Become your brother-in-law's clerk! That is the best advice I can give you."

CHAPTER XX.

FO HI FINDS HIMSELF BAD COMPANY.

It was too late to follow Li-jou-lin's advice. After one has once become a public official, it is very difficult ever to be anything else. For in this line of employment the mind loses all its elasticity and force. It forgets to depend upon itself, and gradually grows unaccustomed to personal effort. What is more agreeable than to leave to others the tiresome task of thinking and willing, and merely to draw one's salary regularly on the last day of the month? What is more delightful than to be exempt both from hope and fear alike? The Public Service is a very comfortable pillow for a sluggish mind. And the man who enters upon it is soon reduced to that state of

enervating security, so that when the time comes for him to assert his independence he has no longer the power to shake off the lethargy with which his whole being is benumbed. He dares not look steadily into the future, and with closed eyes gives himself up, passively, to the current of events. The worst effect of servitude is, that, in the end, it renders man incapable of liberty. The negro learns at last to like the bread of slavery, and to want no other.

Fo Hi junior put on again the yoke which he had thus far worn, and started for his new post. It was at a very little town on the sea-shore. It is so unimportant and so little known, that the Memoirs from which this veracious story is abstracted, have not so much as taken the trouble to tell us its name. The first few days of our hero's sojourn here were filled up with the initia-

tory duties of the position, which were very laborious.

It was the time when the illustrious Fou-ya-no, Governor of Pekin, had taken it into his head to demolish three-fourths of the city for the purpose of rebuilding it more conveniently and beautifully. The most of the provincial Governors followed his example, and it seemed as if they would all be taken with this craze for demolition. Fo Hi, therefore, found half of the population camping out in the midst of the ruins of their former habitations. He started out at once to find apartments, but there were none to be had.

"And where do you live?" the Governor asked him when he went to call on him, according to etiquette.

"On the public square for the present," answered Fo Hi. "There are no more houses."

"Just so," responded the dignitary. "They would hinder you from seeing the town. But just wait ten years, and you shall have some palaces to choose from."

But meanwhile Fo Hi found no other palace than a little ugly room furnished with some old second-hand furniture. But the window opened on the sea, and the fine view pleased him so much that he was reconciled to the rest. When he could get away from his daily tasks, he leaned on the railing of his balcony, and there remained for hours at a time, lazily looking out over the vast waste of waters, and lost in vague reveries. But soon he got tired of this spectacle which, at first, had delighted him. It was the only pleasure he had, and it soon ceased to be a pleasure. He began to be awfully bored. For a long time he had ceased to take any pleasure in his work, and now had a perfect disgust for it. He dragged himself to it

from a mere blind sense of duty, and the sight of a heap of stones was enough to make him sick. He took his meals, with the rest of his associates who were unmarried, in a miserable cook-shop, where they were poisoned with the horrible cooking, with every mark of the highest respect. Here he lingered as long as he could over each meal, not because he found anything entertaining in the company of his fellow-officers. He knew by heart the conversations which were repeated again and again every day. They never talked of anything but professional trifles, day after day going into endless discussions over a stone. He could tell beforehand all the jokes and puns which would be brought forth to garnish and enliven the hour's discourse. And yet he dreaded the moment when he would be left alone with himself. He went back to his room impelled by no other motive than that he was tired

of remaining out of doors. He threw himself upon an old settee and tried to kill time by going to sleep, but sleep would not come at his call. Then he got up, and walked around his room, arranging, disarranging, and fidgetting about. At last, moved by a secret and irresistible restlessness, he went out, but the *ennui* which had driven him from home soon drove him back again. Then he took up a book and tried to read. But he was no longer capable of the long and close attention demanded by serious works, and novels only sickened him. Then he yawned at the top of his voice. People who were in the habit of passing under his windows had sometimes heard strange noises, something like the creaking of a rusty weather-vane. It was Mr. Fo Hi amusing himself by reading aloud. At last the volume fell from his hands, and he looked at it without seeing it, with a dull eye and

pouting lips. His brain buzzed like a bee-hive with the idle thoughts with which it was full. Then he lighted his pipe and smoked for two or three hours without stopping. Then he felt his head grow heavy, his eyelids closed, and his mind subsided into vacancy. At last he was happy.

But a year of this kind of life made a frightful change in Fo Hi. His eyes had been bright and sparkling, but they gradually grew dull and lifeless. His face became bloated, and took on that sallow hue noticeable in old maids who are tired of single blessedness. Sometimes his features wore an expression of idiotic bliss, and at other times looked strangely emaciated, wrinkled, and anxious. His temper turned sour, and he became sensitive and irritable. He took fire from his miseries, and frequently acted with singular harshness toward his inferiors. One day when he was going along the street in

all the glory of his best blue suit embroidered with silver, a subordinate forgot to raise his cap to him. Fo Hi followed the matter up with an obstinacy which can only be explained by the emptiness of his existence, for he was not of a malicious disposition. He even thought of having the poor wretch discharged, who threw himself, at length, at his feet and implored his forgiveness. One of his associates, a good man and burdened with a family, obtained a gratuity of fifty taëls. At another time Fo Hi would have been delighted at this piece of good luck falling to a comrade. But now he resented it bitterly, and for fifteen days talked about it continually in an envious tone, all the while denouncing the injustice of it. He ill-treated the people who had business with him, and tried to exasperate them, and to wreak upon them the sufferings of his own mind. It was a kind

of revenge which relieved and gratified him. The mean and base passions were growing luxuriantly in his bosom, like weeds in a fertile soil which is no longer cultivated.

But Fo Hi had not yet reached the point of insensibility to his condition. He saw himself sinking, little by little, into the abyss, and sometimes he excused himself, saying flippantly: "Oh, pshaw! what do I care!" But more often he was furious with himself, called himself a fool and a knave, and worked himself to a high point of good resolution. But these better moments did not last long, and he fell back again into the depths of his misery.

One morning a young man called on him whose face he did not recognize, but who said to him:

"I have just come from your family, who gave me this letter and charged me to deliver it to you personally."

"Are you acquainted with my family?" asked Fo Hi, in a voice tremulous with feeling.

"I am a commercial traveller. Mr. Fo Hi, senior, with whom I have business relations, knew that I would pass through your town, and asked me to bring you some good news."

"Well, what is it?" said the young man.

"Why, everything is turning out splendidly. Do you know that your father is getting to be a great man? The Emperor actually wanted to appoint him a member of the Municipal Council. He refused the honor on the ground that he was too old, but recommended his son-in-law, who has been very graciously accepted as a substitute by His Majesty. The family made a great banquet in honor of the appointment. They had kept one empty place at the table. It was for you. By chance I called upon your

father that very day, and the empty place was immediately given to me. We all drank your health, and in the evening we danced far into the night. I danced with Madame Chi-kau-go, your sister, who seemed to be the happiest of wives. Oh! that house doesn't breed sorrow, I can tell you!"

"But Pe-ka-o, my other brother-in-law, was he at the reunion?"

"No. He sent his wife. But he was not able to be there himself. He was engaged on an inspection."

"An inspection! Inspecting his farm, I suppose?"

"Bless you, no! He is inspecting other people's farms, in the name of the Emperor, to whom he reports the condition in which he finds them. He is a very skilful agriculturist, and has made a great reputation in the country by his enterprise in trying

new methods of culture. He is a great favorite with the Minister."

"A favorite with the Minister!"

"Of course. The Minister of Agriculture has already sent for him frequently to confer with him on subjects in which he is interested. He can not fail to reach a high position. Next year it is very probable that he will get the Cross of the Order of Merit. But how are you getting on, my boy?"

"Oh! very well, very well, indeed. It couldn't be better," said Fo Hi. But he said it in so piteous a voice that anybody else would have guessed the truth. But this commercial traveller was a good fellow, with whom it was a principle that it is quite enough to take care of one's own affairs without worrying about other people's.

"Good! that's the thing!" he shouted, and squeezing Fo Hi's hand warmly, he took himself off, whistling a gay hunting air.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHAT FO HI THINKS OF THE NEWS.

WHEN his visitor had gone Fo Hi threw himself on the settee, while great tears rolled from his eyes, tears of rage and jealousy. He struck the table violently with his fist and exclaimed:

"Look at me! What had I done that my father should put me to college? It is all his fault, the whole of it! Could I know what this useless and absurd education would at last do for me? Ought he not to have looked ahead, and found out about it? Oh! Father, father! what an injury you have done me! My misery is all your work! Did you hate me? If you had loved me, would you not have let me live near you, rich, happy and honored, as you are? You have

plunged me into the most awful wretchedness!"

He pulled open the drawers of his dressing-case, one after another, with savage violence, and burst out again:

"Not a single taël! And so it will always be! I shall live to the very end, poor, without family, and without comfort, everybody's slave, and, worst of all, the envy of fools! Oh my father! my father!"

He was extremely excited, and ran on in a loud voice, with his fists savagely clenched. The old habit of filial respect held back upon his lips the curses which came very near escaping. But they boiled up in his heart if he did not speak them. At last, however, his eyes fell on the letter which he had left open. He had only run through it hastily, but now he took it up and read it again with more care. His father, after some items of news from the family, ended by saying:

"I am very old, my dear boy, and the day is not distant when I shall have to give an account to the great Tao of what I have done here below. But I shall appear boldly before him with my hands filled with the benedictions of my children. Every year of your lives will plead for me in that day. Your mother and I have given our lives to make yours more comfortable. We have forgotten ourselves for you all, but especially for you, my dear boy. You have always been our best loved child, and we sacrificed for you even your sisters' future. Perhaps it was wrong, but God has not punished us for this excessive love. He has blessed the marriage of our daughters, as he has watched over you. I am a happy father, and I shall die without regret, if, before I pass into the other world, I can embrace you once more, and hear from your lips your last words of gratitude."

"Poor father!" said Fo Hi, deeply touched by these kind words; and he burst again into tears. But this time they were real tears which fell, drop after drop, upon the wicked words that he had uttered, and washed them out of the book of his life.

"And why should I not be happy? Is it then absolutely impossible? Are not these torments which I am enduring, the results of my character rather than of my circumstances? Is there not a man among my associates who is contented with his lot?" He passed them all in review before his mind. With some of them he was not well enough acquainted to know whether they were really contented or not.

"It is true they haven't the appearance of suffering. But then who would think from my looks, that twenty times a day I have a great mind to throw myself into the sea? When I walk about the streets

in my uniform embroidered with silver, what do they see but a smiling face? Who can say positively that they do not suffer the same torments as I, or even worse? For the most of them have wives and children on their hands, and thus their possibilities of suffering are vastly greater than mine."

As for others, he had no doubt of the state of their minds. Day after day he had heard them complaining, and cursing their superiors. He knew that they, like himself, were the prey of all those petty and vile passions which bury their stinging points so deeply in human life. "No," he said with bitter satisfaction, "we are all convicts chained together in the same galley. Some sit nearer the keeper than others and so feel more frequently the weight of his cudgel, but it is the same cudgel which falls upon us all."

But all at once he struck his hand to his forehead, like a man who suddenly calls up something which he had forgotten, and exclaimed: "Oh! Yes. Le-hi-to! I forgot Le-hi-to!"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE HAPPY LE-HI TO.

THIS Le-hi-to was a big bachelor, who was always contented and always singing, and whose jovial face Oriental poets might very well have likened to the full moon. He lived by himself in a very retired way, and had but few acquaintances among his associates. And yet he was on the best of terms with them all, and ready to do them a kindness whenever it was needed. Everybody liked him. His big, ruddy, good-natured countenance, beaming with mirth, inspired confidence and good-will. No one did his work better or with an air of greater satisfaction. He paid no obsequious attentions to his superiors, but when his work was done, made his bow to them, and had

nothing more to do with them. But he also never spoke ill of them, and judging from his perfectly frank face it was difficult to believe that he could have hard feelings toward anybody. And yet he had been in the Department for twelve years, and had never obtained the slightest advancement, although he had always conducted himself in a most exemplary manner. But it never seemed to trouble him. He bore philosophically the injustice with which he was treated. In fact it might even be questioned whether he so much as suspected the injustice which was done him.

"Well, to be sure!" said Fo Hi, "there is a happy man, or I am greatly mistaken. I must go and see him, and get him to tell me his secret."

Now Le-hi-to lived on the remote outskirts of the town, in a little house of which he was the sole occupant. And as

he had no housekeeper, he opened the door himself for Fo Hi.

"Why! good morning, comrade!" he exclaimed cheerily, giving Fo Hi a warm grasp of the hand. "I am happy to see you. I have found it! It was hard work, but I have found it at last!"

And he rubbed his hands with as much satisfaction as if he had at last solved the problem of squaring the circle.

"What on earth have you found, to give you so much delight?" asked our hero, in astonishment.

"Hush! Don't say a word! Just come with me!"

So he took Fo Hi by the arm, and led the way through two rooms, which were so carefully washed, waxed, and set in order, that they might have been taken for the apartments of some old maid. Then he threw open the door of a little cabinet, and

exclaimed triumphantly: "Look! Look!"

Fo Hi looked with all his eyes. The cabinet was surrounded with large panes of glass set in painted wooden frames, and on the shelves within, which rose up some five or six feet from the floor, a great number of shells were arranged in the most perfect order, all labelled and numbered. In the middle of the room was a little table on which were a glue-pot, some little slips of paper, a pair of scissors, some thread, some fragments of shell, and writing materials.

"Bless my soul! What's all this?" asked Fo Hi, with an inquiring look.

"What's this?" replied the jolly fellow, cheerily. "Why, this is my collection of shells. What do you think of it?"

"Oh! it's very fine, very fine indeed!" said Fo Hi, who really felt very little interest in the matter.

"You would better say that it is the very

finest in China. It is not yet quite complete. But I am adding to it all the time, and this very day, my friend, this very day, see the priceless treasure which I have succeeded in getting." And as he said this, he took carefully from its box a shell in which Fo Hi could not see anything peculiar. So he said indifferently:

"What! That?"

"*That!*" exclaimed Le-hi-to, skipping about gleefully. "*That!* You profane fellow! You don't know that *that* is one of the most marvellous shells now in existence, and that probably you could not find another, even in the Imperial Museum. It has taken me ten years to find *that!* In shells of this kind there are usually but eight reddish lines traced on the valve—you understand, of course, the valve? There are a few with nine lines, and a very few have ten. Of this last variety I own two specimens which

are very valuable. But this one, which you have so contemptuously called *that*—look at it, my dear fellow, and count them for yourself!—this one has eleven lines! The eleventh is undoubtedly not very clear, but it is there. It is a rare treasure, and I would not take a thousand crowns for it. The famous scholar, Pont-cho-ki, claims to have seen one in which as many as twelve lines were visible. The one thing necessary to complete my collection is one of these shells with twelve lines. But I will find it. One always finds what one looks for. Yes, even if I have to dive into the deepest sea for it, that shell must be mine. I will have it, and then I can die contented."

"Do you intend to write a book on this subject?" asked Fo Hi.

"I? Oh, not at all! I should like to, but I could not find the time."

"Is it for your own instruction, then, that

you are putting yourself to so much trouble? Are you searching for some great truth, the key to which lies in the lines of these shells?"

"Not in the least! I am collecting them for the sole pleasure of having the finest collection in China. You see by the empty spaces that I still lack a number of pieces? These spaces are so many eye-sores to me, and I would make the tour of the world to fill them."

"And are you happy?" asked Fo Hi, with a deeply thoughtful air.

"Perfectly happy! Can there be a happier man in this world than a collector of shells? Just you begin at it once, and you will say the same thing!"

"Perhaps he is right," said the young man to himself, as he returned home. "It is absolutely necessary to have a passion and an object in life. A passion for shells is cer-

tainly not very exalted, and their collection is not a very useful occupation. But even this is far better than to care for nothing and to do nothing. But the mischief of it is that you can't take a passion as you can take a cold."

Then he thought over all the things which he might take up and pursue as Le-hi-to pursued the collection of shells. But he could think of nothing which was to his taste, and at last said to himself:

"Ah! the best thing undoubtedly would be a passion for one's profession."

He went home and sat down in a corner near the fireplace. The dog-days were at their height, and consequently there was no fire on the hearth.

"What a miserable season of the year summer is! Fire keeps a man company, and cheers him up. When one hears it flaming and crackling, one is no longer alone.

There is nothing sadder than an empty chimney, an empty purse, an empty heart, and an empty life. Nature abhors a vacuum."

He cast his eyes about him, and his room had never seemed so large. He yawned wearily two or three times, and said:

"Really, this life is only supportable when there are two to bear it! When God put Adam in the earthly Paradise, with nothing to do but to walk about, the first thing he did was to supply him with a wife."

CHAPTER XXIII.

SHALL I THEN GET MARRIED?

"A WIFE!" Fo Hi repeated to himself. "A wife!"

And immediately the fourth commandment of his code flashed before his memory in letters of fire:

> Refrain from wedlock till thou'rt gray,
> Nor taste of love's delicious sweet.

But he was disposed to argue the matter, and went on:

"And why not? Why should I be debarred from the only true happiness—I, who need it more than anybody? Two unhappy wretches together might make a very endurable existence of it.

"I should have near me a being who would love and comfort me, and divert my

mind from my troubles. We should cling close to one another, so as to carry together the burden of life. Then we should have children, and they would fill the room with shouts and kisses. We should educate them, and our lives would have an object. And thus at last I should learn the pleasant torture of hoping and fearing."

This idea Fo Hi went on turning over in his mind for a long time. It rose and curled about in the air with the smoke of his pipe. He conjured up a charming picture of his future happiness, and asked himself with surprise why he had not thought of it sooner. He had been invited to a ball to be given that very evening by His Honor the Governor of the town. So he spread on the pomade with extra care, and put on his full-dress suit embroidered with silver, for which he had paid with the happiness of his life, and which was now to

repay him abundantly. With incomparable grace and ease, he made his *entrée* to the Governor's parlors. A large number of young girls in white and rose-colored dresses were ranged in two rows on opposite sides of the room for the admiration of susceptible young men. In the rear the mothers and the aunts of the pretty creatures formed a sombre background. Fo Hi passed along between this double row of marriageable young women, without the slightest idea of the emotions which he was exciting in the breasts of these aunts and mothers.

He begged one of the young ladies to be kind enough to do him the honor to dance with him. But I am compelled in the interest of truth to say that he chose this particular one for the sole reason that she was nearest him to the right. I know very well that the ladies will have a grudge against my hero for his indifference to female charms.

But it can't be helped. The truth must not suffer. Fo Hi was not a very brilliant dancer, but he got through with it at last. He tried to be very witty, and he succeeded—or at least he thought he did. He saw the young lady's lips part frequently in an appreciative smile, and he had the opportunity to notice that she had pretty teeth. He asked the privilege of the next quadrille, and she very politely accepted him for the seventeenth. So he leaned gracefully against a mantel at the end of the room, to watch her more at his ease while she was dancing the intervening sixteen. Here he was standing, lost in thought, when he felt a hand laid on his shoulder. It was the Controller, who greeted him pleasantly, and struck up a conversation.

"Aha, my boy! we are in love, are we? Do you want some one to ask her hand for you? I am a friend of the family.

Shall I speak for you? No? Ah! I see you are moving cautiously. Well, I wash my hands of the matter, then! There is nothing that I abominate so much as mixing up in other people's affairs. I only warn you that your esteem for the young lady is creating a scandal. Oh, don't be alarmed! I mean in the good sense of the word. That is, it is all the talk in the ball-room. In fact, they are already talking of marriage. Well, it would not be so bad a bargain! She is pretty, has fine blue eyes, and a small hand. You might do much worse. The family stands very high in these parts. I know her father. He is a man of fortune, and is not likely to live long. Just think of it! A beautiful girl and a handsome dot! On the whole, it isn't so bad to take, is it? All right! Come along and let me present you to her mother."

Fo Hi, quite deafened by this flow of

speech, was unable to get in a word. He did not so much follow his self-imposed patron as he allowed himself to be dragged along, and was received with a most engaging smile by an extremely faded old lady. She complimented him on his methodical habits, which were so well known, and told him that nothing in the world would induce her to give her daughter to a man of objectionable character. She had always dreamed of having a Government officer for a son-in-law. They afforded so many guaranties of good behavior to the family into which they had the honor to be admitted. They were usually economical, sensible, domestic, and disinclined to wild and adventurous notions. The very arduousness of their duties necessitated a regular life, without which happiness was quite impossible. They had a settled income, and a mother could die in peace when she had

confided to such a man her dearest earthly treasure. Wherever they went they commanded respect, and there was no greater happiness in store for a young woman than that of entering a drawing-room escorted by a splendid blue uniform embroidered with silver.

As Fo Hi listened to these flattering words, he almost burst with pride and satisfaction, and forthwith asked leave to call upon the faded old lady. The next day he went, and two days after he went again, and then fell into the agreeable habit of going every evening. Sorrow and *ennui* took their flight. He was in love. Father, mother, brothers, and even the house-dog, received him with great consideration. The young lady herself, alone, no longer smiled upon him, although her mouth still contained those thirty-two bewitching teeth. But Fo Hi attributed her sadness to mod-

esty, and made his proposals to her father. The Controller had talked about a dowry of twenty thousand taëls, but the father, in a very magnificent manner, stipulated for but ten thousand. Fo Hi did not dare to object, although his plans were somewhat disarranged by this reduction. The next week it was intimated that he would receive but one half the amount in cash, and that the income of the remainder would be paid annually. Again our hero submitted without an objection. Then five or six days later the mother declared that she should die if she were to be separated from her daughter, and that she would give up a part of her house to the young couple and the rent could be deducted from the income of the dowry.

"Do whatever you please," said Fo Hi, gallantly. "I am too happy to object to anything."

"Give me your hand, my son-in-law," answered the old lady. "You are a noble fellow, and I confide to you my daughter's happiness without the least fear."

But on the morning of the day on which the contract was finally to be signed, Fo Hi received a call from a young man whom he did not know but whose honest face and hearty way pleased him from the first.

"Sir," said the stranger, "I am about to speak of a very delicate matter, and I entreat you to take it in good part. Do you love passionately the young person whom you are about to marry?"

"Why, of course," replied Fo Hi, in amazement.

"That is unfortunate, for it makes my errand so much the more painful. I will not keep you in suspense. In a word, the business is this: I also am in love with your intended, and she is in love with me."

"What? She is in love with you?"

"Yes, and she has been for a long time. Oh, don't be uneasy! She is as chaste as she is beautiful, and I am an honorable man. You can imagine, sir, what a blow to me is this approaching marriage, which is to destroy all my hopes."

"But why have you never proposed to her father for her? I have not stood in your way. I think—"

"Oh, I did propose to him a long time ago, but I was refused. I am not a Government officer, sir; that was the mischief of it. I had not the right to wear, like you, the livery of the Public Service. We both received the same education, but, unlike you, when I left college I did not ask a position from the Emperor. I tried to make one for myself by hard work. There were some oil-wells in this region which had been allowed to fall into neglect. These I

bought very cheap, for they were of no value in their neglected condition. I re-opened and worked them, and the result is that I laid the foundations of a new business, which will add to the wealth of this whole country, and which, I have great hopes, will also some day make me a rich man. In a few years I shall have made a large fortune, and will then be able to marry to my taste, without anxiety about the amount of the dot. I shall simply ask my wife to bring joy and domestic bliss to my hearth. Such, sir, were the thoughts with which I consoled and encouraged myself. Well, just then by chance I met the beautiful creature whose eyes have conquered you. I could not see her without loving her. I asked her consent, which I hold to be the first duty of every honorable man, and she graciously gave it. Then I went to her family, and explained

my position and my hopes. But the very arguments which I thought ought to plead for me, were turned against me. The father was averse to giving his daughter to a merchant, and the mother contended that fortunes based upon trade were insecure, and that her grandchildren might die in the work-house for all that she knew. Both of them declared that a young person like their daughter was not fitted to apply herself to the details of business. In vain did I assure them that she should have no care of my business, except so far as she voluntarily chose, for the purpose of giving employment and object to her life. All my entreaties and even my tears were in vain. I had to withdraw. Then I heard of your proposal, and my first impulse was to cut your throat. But I thought over it, and restrained myself. I determined to let the matter pass in

silence; and that silence I never would have broken, believe me, if I had not this very day received this letter, which I beg you will read."

Fo Hi read the letter with great agitation. The young lady was his betrothed. He saw clearly that she did not love him, and that she was being married to him by force, and, worse still, she was begging another to take any necessary means to hinder the marriage before it was consummated.

We have already noticed that energy of character was not the ruling trait of our hero. The desperate nature of the situation, which nerves up other men, was calculated only to dishearten him. He quickly pictured to himself all the annoyances of the marriage which he was contemplating: a wife who would only hate him, and a dowry which would not be paid, the torment of a mother-in-law with whom he

would be obliged to live, and the wretchedness which would result from it all.

"But what is there that I can do?" he exclaimed, in the voice of a man who is drowning and cries out for a rope.

"Write a very polite letter to your expected father-in-law, in which you tell him———whatever you please; that his daughter does not seem to be very eager to marry you, and that you are afraid you may not make her happy, which is really the truth."

"The deuce! the deuce!" growled Fo Hi, rubbing his ear. But the young man fell on his knees, and urged him so strongly, with such hearty and passionate assurances of eternal gratitude, that our hero had not the heart to refuse. So he wrote the letter, and regretted it ten minutes after, when it was too late to recall it.

He went to the window to collect his

ideas a little, and as he looked out he saw on the beach a very pretty young woman who was gathering the shells which the waves had washed up. Her dress was tucked up to her knees, exposing her well-made limbs. When Fo Hi saw her he put two fingers to his lips and gallantly threw her a kiss, to which bit of politeness the young woman responded with a loud laugh. She then took up a little pebble and roguishly made believe to throw it at him; to which pretty trick Fo Hi responded again by opening his coat as if to receive it. The result of it all was that ten minutes later he was on the beach in full conversation with the pretty flirt. He dared not offer her his arm in open daylight, but he said he would be extremely pleased if she would bring him some shells some day at dusk; and after giving her some directions as to where he lived, he went back to his

room, looking about stealthily to see if any one had observed him. But this little flirtation cost him much dearer than he thought. For he was observed; and when the father of his intended received the letter breaking off the match which had been announced everywhere and was already nearly concluded, he reported in the town that this Fo Hi was a scamp, who was leading a very scandalous life, and that he had found himself compelled at the last moment to refuse him his daughter. Fo Hi was accordingly sent for by the Director-in-chief, and asked for an explanation of his behavior. But Fo Hi very curtly replied that he did not consider that the Department had any right to inquire into the motives of an act which affected himself alone. He showed by a very strong argument that His Honor the Director-in-chief had the right of control only over the heaps of

stones and not over the marriages of his subordinates. But the dignitary retorted sharply: "That is where you are mistaken. I am the father of my subordinates. I am responsible for their conduct, and whatever may affect their character affects me—me, who am their chief and representative. I do not admit the subtle distinction which you make between the official and the man. Bear in mind, sir, that always and everywhere you are an official. It is an indelible character which you can not separate from yourself like a cloak which you can put on and off at your convenience. Every step which you take, every word which you speak, reflects upon the Department, and I must give an account of it to the Emperor. The office of an employee of the Government is a sacred thing—a fact which you seem too often to forget. I have not been willing, by inflicting pun-

ishment immediately, to add to the scandal which you have already caused a still greater scandal. But if I am lenient, it is not for your sake, for you scarcely deserve so much consideration, but for the sake of a respectable family whom you have plunged into sorrow and tears. Go, sir, but remember that the Department has its eye upon you!"

Fo Hi left the presence of the Director very much crestfallen. He tried to console himself for this terrible rebuke by courting the company of the pretty flirt whom he had met on the beach. But he soon found out that she was ignorant and ill-bred. She threatened to compromise him, however, if he jilted her, so he was forced to submit to her odious ways. But at last he revolted against this intolerable tyranny, and after a painful scene, which lasted for two hours, left her forever. She followed

him to his apartments, but he put her out of doors. Then she held on to the balustrades and screamed at the top of her voice, until all the neighbors were aroused, and a large number of people ran to the spot to witness this lovers' quarrel. And this last development did the business for Fo Hi. Two days later he received an order of transfer.

It was the fourth time in six years that he had changed his residence. He had come to such a pass, however, that these changes no longer disturbed him. The life which he was leading was so insipid and disgusting to him, that he no longer took the trouble to be irritated by the misfortunes with which it was so thickly strewn. He was like the negro slave, who has no ambition to exert himself, because he has no power to change his fate.

Fo Hi was packing his trunk for the

new departure, when the young merchant who had taken his betrothed from him came in:

"Sir," he said, "I owe to you my happiness. Your withdrawal has compelled the old man to give his daughter to the only son-in-law available. I shall never forget the service which you have done me, and I am here to acknowledge it, and to pay you back, if I can. My business is continually extending itself. But I am about to advance in a new direction. Thirty leagues from here I have discovered and bought a new oil-well. I want an intelligent and trustworthy man to take charge of it. I will take you into partnership, and you can make your own fortune while helping me to make mine."

"I a merchant! I sell oil!" shouted Fo Hi.

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" said the

young man, with a shade of sarcasm in his voice. "I beg you to excuse my offer. I see very clearly that it was improper."

For a single moment Fo Hi had a strong inclination to throw himself into the young fellow's arms and cry:

"No! No! Your advice is that of a sensible man and a true friend. I am only a proud idiot, a miserable fool saturated with ridiculous prejudices. Let us go into the oil business together, and pardon me for my silliness." But a petty sense of shame held him back. The precious opportunity, which he ought to have seized, slipped by and falling into a chair he burst into tears. But he quickly recovered himself and said: "Oh, pshaw! It's silly to weep. That never cures anything. Let's get the trunk packed and be off. I will do like that fellow Le-hi-to. I will make a collection of shells!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN WHICH FO HI MEETS WITH A NEW ADVENTURE.

Fo Hi found once more, in the town to which chance now brought him, the everlasting apartments which he had already seen everywhere, with dirty paper on the walls and second-hand veneered furniture. He took possession of them with a heavy heart and some such thoughts as these:

"Just think of it! there isn't a thing here that knows me or cares for me! Here I come like a traveller to a hotel which he has to leave the very next day. He finds nowhere a memory or a thought to cheer and console him. Everything around stares indifferently and vulgarly at him, and chills him to the bone. Yes, in this room, which be-

longs to nobody because it belongs to everybody, I am nothing but a transient guest, like so many others who have gone before me without leaving a trace of themselves. It will be just so with me. There will never be a single radiant spot in this room into which I can put a part of my heart and life. I am pitching my tent here to-day. To-morrow I shall have to refold it, and not a thing that I see here now for the first time, will rise up to hold me back and cry out: 'Stay with us! Haven't we always been good friends to you? Where will you find a more comfortable arm-chair to sleep in and to think of your sweetheart? Don't you remember how faithfully this secretary has guarded your little savings? Where will you find a better friend and a wiser counsellor?'—No; these walls upon which generations have left their finger-marks, this worn-out and broken furniture which seems

to be yawning with listlessness and fatigue,—nothing here has anything to say to me. I could remain here ten years, and still be nothing but a stranger. Government officers are the nomads of civilization, and the only home which a nomad has is that which he carries around on the back of his pack-horse.

"And you, my poor trunk," he went on again, as he was undoing the straps of his luggage, "are my only faithful friend. Old and dilapidated as you are, I still love you. We have never forsaken one another. You recall to my mind my father's house, from which I started out with you, young, handsome, and beaming, and then again the many journeys which we have made together since. I have no doubt we shall make many more, but I shall not mind them so much if you go with me. When I raise your lid, it seems to me that I can see all

the memories of my life thronging out of you. They stream before my eyes, and I find a melancholy pleasure in surveying them. You are the one point in this room at which my past joins on to my present life."

The town to which Fo Hi had this time been sent was situated in the extreme south of the Empire. The minds of the inhabitants, heated by the fierce rays of a tropical sun, were naturally passionate, and more than once terrible quarrels, in which much blood was shed, had arisen over matters of religion. The bonzes and fakirs were the absolute rulers of the district, and there never was a more jealous and insolent dynasty. They had organized a vast association, partly lay and partly clerical, membership in which was intended to be the only alternative to death by impalement or fire. The society was named after the great Pa-o-li, one of

the most illustrious fakirs of China. It was founded under the pretext of assisting the poor and the sick, but was secretly working to undermine the power of the Emperor, whom it hated, because on his accession he had said that he should keep the priests well in check and compel them to keep their place as citizens and subjects. This priestly association therefore hated him cordially, although it did not scorn to make use of him whenever it was advantageous to do so. It acknowledged but one master—the Grand Lama, who claimed to be God's representative on earth. From him it received its watchword, and accepted it with implicit obedience. Its members mutually sustained one another, and persecuted with relentless hatred all who did not belong to the society, whether they were merely indifferent to it or open enemies. They had adopted as their motto the celebrated saying of a cer-

tain sage, "He who is not with me is against me," and unfortunately for those who were guilty of the folly of standing in opposition to it, it launched against them its infallible curse. All expedients were allowable to compass the ruin of these heretics. When the judges could not be influenced against them and their destruction thus be accomplished at a blow, they were surrounded by an invisible net of injurious insinuations and petty annoyances, and were thus gotten rid of gradually, by slow and gentle but no less irresistible means. These religionists had great power over the Government employees, whom, in fact, they advanced or discharged at their pleasure.

Fo Hi was not slow to discover this state of things. He had never professed hostility to religion. He held that one should respect the religious views of others, even if he lived up to his own imperfectly. But our

hero was endowed with a certain contrariness of disposition which led him inevitably to take views exactly the opposite of those which were being forced upon him. Now he had no sooner arrived in the country than he was seized with a burning desire to break lances with the bonzes and their party. He was never seen at any of the religious ceremonies, and he allowed no opportunity to escape of assailing those whom he called bigots and hypocrites. When he was warned of the risk which he was running, he replied: "What have I to fear? Are not these people the furious enemies of the Emperor who pays me and to whom I have sworn obedience? I hate them, of course, but is it not my duty to hate them? Is it not the duty of every loyal citizen to detest them? If they dared to attack me should I not be protected by the name of the Emperor, whose cause I am maintaining

against his bitterest and most implacable enemies?"

You see Fo Hi was still very youthful in his views. He was always imagining that it is logic which governs the world. He had no idea that the agents of the Emperor would be the first to denounce and sacrifice him, and that the Emperor would never know anything about it. But the catastrophe came much more quickly than even old Li-jou-lin could have predicted.

The Society of Pa o-li had made arrangements for a great public procession to the temple of Ja-ghi, for the purpose of invoking the blessings of Heaven upon the persecuted Grand Lama. But by whom was he persecuted? No one, of course, would say, although it was everybody's secret. All the Government officers received an invitation to honor this religious demonstration with their presence. It was an invitation and a com-

mand in one. Fo Hi could not have had a better opportunity to display his blue uniform embroidered with silver. But he was exasperated against the bonzes. So he refused to attend, and did not even take the trouble to offer an excuse for the refusal. But he did still more. He stationed himself insolently in full view of the procession and watched it with a proud and scornful countenance.

When the procession reached the temple of Ja-ghi, one of the priests mounted a platform, and drawing from his pocket a great roll of paper proceeded to read a fulsome and violent discourse, in which the Emperor himself was roundly abused. As Fo Hi listened to the disloyal words of the speaker, he fairly boiled with wrath and indignation. He could no longer contain himself, and springing to his feet suddenly in the midst of a profound pause, he shouted

at the top of his voice, like a blast from the last trump: "It's an infamous lie!"

This of course threw the whole assembly into indescribable confusion. But Fo Hi remained standing, with a bold and aggressive look. He did not, however, remain long, for the police rushed upon him and secured him, and took him off to the lock-up. His trial was conducted with surprising dispatch, for he had to do with men who never allow a revenge to loiter, except when they can not effect it otherwise. He was unanimously condemned and sentenced to be impaled. And now the prisoner was seen to take out his note-book and write something in it, which was found to be this maxim, with which his decalogue was at last completed:

> Before the priests thy offering lay
> Of worship that to God is meet.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN WHICH FO HI IS NOT EXECUTED.

THE presiding judge asked Fo Hi if he had anything to say why the sentence should not be enforced. To which formal question he replied:

"Yes, your Honor. I am a Government officer, and I claim all the rights which this title gives me. My position gives me the right to be impaled on a stake of gold, and I believe that this demand can not be refused."

The judges thereupon retired to their private apartment to deliberate, and in a few minutes returned to their places on the bench.

"Prisoner Fo Hi," said the Chief-Judge, "however unworthy you have shown yourself of the privilege which the law accords

you; we do not wish to deprive you of it. You shall have the honor of being impaled upon the golden stake, with the usual solemnities."

Now this method of execution was one of the finest ceremonies of which China has preserved the memory. Fo Hi was arrayed in his blue uniform embroidered with silver, and marched to the place of execution with as much serenity of manner as he would have gone to a ball at the Governor's. The drums beat the march, and bands of music, stationed along the route, filled the air with martial music. The crowd was enormous, and the platforms which had been erected for the occasion were filled with the most beautiful ladies of the town, who were dressed in all their finery as if for a *fête*.

All this splendor was calculated to flatter the vanity of Fo Hi; but as he caught

sight of the stake in the distance, rising up in the public square, he was disturbed by some reflections which were not so gay as they might be.

"What strange ideas my father must have had," he thought, "to make a Government officer of me! Ah! if they ever catch me again! But come, come! No weakness. Everybody is looking at me." He pushed back his hair, and went on resolutely and smilingly. As he was passing along he overheard a civilian in the crowd saying to his neighbor:

"What lucky fellows these Government officials are to be impaled on such a splendid instrument! Such luck will never fall to us poor wretches! They wouldn't show so much ceremony in putting us out of the way!"

This envious speech gave poor Fo Hi a great deal of satisfaction; but it was the

last satisfaction he was to get out of the imposing ceremony. For he was already in the hands of the executioner, when a horseman was seen approaching at furious speed, shaking a paper in his hand, and shouting: "Pardon! Pardon!"

"Come, come! Hurry up, my friend!" said the bonze, who acted as Master of Ceremonies, to the executioner. "We are not here to trifle away our time."

But Fo Hi was in no haste to be done for, and managed to delay the proceedings until the horseman reached the square. It turned out to be Pe-ka-o, who brought a pardon signed by the Emperor himself. And Fo Hi fell into his arms, quite beside himself with joy.

"How on earth did you do it?" he asked, when they were once more alone. Pe-ka-o then told him that he had come to be one of the great landholders of the Em-

pire, and that he was in a fair way to be Minister of Agriculture some day. He said that he saw the Emperor frequently, and was consulted by him on a number of subjects. As soon as he heard of the conviction of his brother-in-law he went directly to the palace. There he had been received by the Emperor, who said to him that he could refuse him nothing.

"What! the Emperor can refuse you nothing?" asked Fo Hi.

"Well, he said so, at any rate."

"So much the better! You shall ask him to give me an appointment!"

EPILOGUE AND DECALOGUE.

THE family of Fo Hi was thus reunited once more after so many years, and now the young official was quite dazzled by the luxury with which he found his father surrounded. His two brothers-in-law also had become very rich, and were authorized to wear three coral buttons on their caps. But between themselves they smiled at these distinctions, which really bring with them no happiness. They were prouder of their children, who were growing up about them like so many rosebuds, than they would have been of all the coral buttons in the world. The oldest of these little treasures was now ten years of age; and as Fo Hi, junior, passed his hand over the boy's hair, he said gayly:

"We will make an official of this little fellow!"

"No, thank you!" exclaimed the youngster's mother. "I don't care to have him impaled."

"Tut! tut! my girl," said Fo Hi, senior, who was not yet cured of his old notions. "It is a great thing to be impaled on a golden stake to the sound of martial music!"

Fo Hi, junior, also promised that he would give his nephew the benefit of the experience which had cost him so dear, and would thus smooth the way for the young aspirant for political honors. "I have," said he, "reduced the principles of conduct in the Public Service to ten rules, which are to be learned by heart, and are always to be observed."

"I should like to know what they are," said Li-jou-lin.

The young man accordingly drew a paper from his pocket and read aloud his code of conduct as follows:

I.

To thy superiors homage pay,
And them profoundly do thou greet.

II.

All those who are beneath thy sway
Harshly and mercilessly treat.

III.

No zeal nor energy display,
Nor work with unbecoming heat.

IV.

Refrain from wedlock till thou'rt gray,
Nor taste of love's delicious sweet.

V.

Temper thy taste for all things gay
Be in indulgences discreet.

VI.

Let bread and water be thy stay,
Nor rice-wine cause unsteady feet.

VII.

All public wishes disobey,
And practice even the courts to cheat.

VIII.

With every change of rulers, say
New oaths, their favors to entreat.

IX.

Before the priests thy offering lay
Of worship that to God is meet.

X.

Think thou of nothing night or day,
But thy advancement to complete.

"Very good, indeed," said Li-jou-lin, when the young man stopped reading; "but instead of these ten rules, I will give you one which is worth them all."

"What is it? What is it?" they all shouted together.

"Keep out of office; and thus may
Thy years in independence fleet."

And assuredly this old Li-jou-lin was no fool!

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